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[“MISS TRAVERS!” CRIED SIR GUY VERNON, “IS IT POSSIBLE?”]

VERNON'S DESTINY.

CHAPTER VI.

It has been hinted before in this story that the Travers family were poor. Isola herself always admitted the fact. Sir Guy had glanced at it when he spoke of her relations to his mother, but neither of these casual observations can give the slightest idea of the state of impecuniosity to which the unlucky tribe had sunk.

I use the word “tribe” advisedly; it was Lieutenant Travers's own; he always asserted his children were too numerous for any other designation.

I am quite aware that it is not etiquette for a gentleman, so low down in the profession, to flaunt his military rank on all occasions; but, alas! this same humble, military title was Gilbert Travers's sole claim to respectability.

He really came of gentle blood, and his wife had been a lady; but (and this was a large comprehensive but) they had had to make so many shifts, to have resort to so many queer

contrivances, to go through such prodigious courses of “humble pie,” that they would never have proclaimed their origin with a chance of its being credited, but for the poor little title they clung to so perseveringly as the last relic of “better days.”

The version of the family history given forth was, that the Lieutenant had been in a crack regiment of the line (they never by any chance specified *which* regiment) in his youth, but the charges of a numerous family had made it impossible for him to continue in such an expensive position.

He had, therefore, sold his commission, and the interest of the sum thus raised and of his wife's little fortune brought in his present slender income.

I don't know how many of his listeners believed this story; it was the purest fiction to begin with. Mrs. Travers never had a penny of fortune, and if she had had her husband would have spent the principal in a very brief space. As to the price of the commission, that had gone at once to defray “debts of honour.”

The family literally had no income; they

lived like the birds of the air, from hand to mouth, and Mrs. Travers suffered under those extra cares which do not afflict the mother of a feathered brood; her tribe required house-rent, clothes, and education, and, what is more wonderful, they got it—after a fashion.

For some years past the tribe had resided at Beauville sur Mer. It was cheap, it was cheerful, and there was a chance of the Lieutenant picking up an adversary at *écarté*, or other games—a thing which generally proved a calamity to the adversary and a blessing to the tribe.

Rex, the eldest hope, took leave of his family in November with the intention of sailing at once to Sydney; three of the boys had left the nest, and were keeping their heads fairly above water in distant towns.

Isola (whose age was far nearer Sir Guy's reckoning than her own) had made a grand match, so there were only nine young ones at home to be clothed, fed, and run into debt for.

It was a day or two before the expedition to Raglan Castle, and Lena Ione Travers, usually called Lit from her initials, sat at

her mother's side, eagerly discussing Major Merton's letter of invitation.

She was as unlike Isola as she well could be. Isola had been the family idol, at whose shrine everyone was expected to worship.

Lit was the family drudge, who always seemed to have the hardest blows of fate dealt out to her. Lit had quite a genius for appeasing irate tradespeople, and making a sovereign go as far as two.

She had almost a Frenchwoman's taste in dress, and attired her younger sisters prettily out of next to nothing. She was such a good cook that if, on a specially busy occasion the family ventured to "entertain," her services were always retained in the kitchen. Half the people who talked of the "Travers' girls" had never seen the second girl.

It was a trifle awkward while Isola was at home, and posing as an *ingue* of eighteen, to produce a younger sister, who owned to being two-and-twenty; so poor Lit was judiciously kept in the background.

"You can't go!" said Mrs. Travers, decidedly. "It's quite out of the question! Your father could never afford your travelling expenses! Besides, think of your clothes—a pretty disgrace it would be to Isola to show such a sister to her friends!"

"I should like to go!" returned Lit, speaking with unusual pertinacity. "I have been wanting to go to London for a long time!"

Had the town clock in the market-place of Beaufort-sur-Mer suddenly spoken of having long cherished a desire to visit the English metropolis Mrs. Travers could not have felt much more surprise.

"Whatever for?"

"That's my business!"

"Isa doesn't live in London!"

"No; but I could easily take a day there in passing through to Monmouthshire! I should like to go, mother! It is such a kind letter, and I like Major Merton so much!"

"How do you know Isa wants you?"

"She would not have let him invite me if it was against her wishes," said poor Lit, never suspecting the Major had intended her visit as a pleasant surprise for his wife. "You know Isa always has her own way. He says they have been preparing a charming surprise for me. Mother do let me go! I am two-and-twenty, you know, and have never been anywhere in my whole life!"

Mrs. Travers relented just a little. It was so true; the family Cinderellas had very little taste of even such pleasures as came to the rest of the tribe.

"It's the money, Lit, and your dress!"

"I don't mind the dress!" said Lit, in her rebuking way. "I always look tidy, and Major Merton knew we were poor enough when he married Isa."

"I think he might have helped us just a little. Such a rich man as he is—a few bank-notes would have been nothing to him!"

"I think he meant to help us."

"What do you mean, Lit?"

"I always thought when he gave Isa that handsome allowance he meant some of it to come to us. Jim is such a true gentleman, I fancy he could not bear to offer us money himself, and thought we should not mind taking it from Isa."

"She has never offered it."

"Never? Isa has a knack of spending money, you see, mother."

"Well, it's her own," said Mrs. Travers, who could never bear to hear her darling blamed; "and I'm sure she paid a pretty price for it, marrying a man old enough to be her father."

"It was her own free choice."

"Because she could not bear the stings of poverty; she was a fragile blossom."

No answer. Lit had her own opinion of Isola's character. Mrs. Travers felt this, and resented the silence.

"Perhaps you think your sister married for money? I dare say, miss, in your own mind you call her mercenary."

"She did not marry for anything else," said

Lit, sadly. "How could she when she loved Reginald Denzil with every fibre of her heart. To my mind, mother, it would have been honester to have married him."

"Marry Denzil! a ne'er-do-well, who never did a day's work in his life, who lived upon his high connections and good looks; a man who has gone utterly to the bad, and been cut by all his friends!"

"He was not a good man," admitted Lit; "but he was never so very bad until Isola jilted him."

"I won't have you abuse your sister!"

"Well, you know it was that. They were engaged, and if Major Merton had never come here I think Isa would have married the Captain. I know he did a great many bad things, but he just worshipped the ground she walked on; her loss made him reckless."

Mrs. Travers stirred the fire, and hesitated. She had something she wished to say, and she hardly knew how to begin.

"I suppose she never mentions him to you, Lit, in her letters—Denzil, I mean."

"Never."

"He is in England somewhere, I know that much. Lit, it would be an awful thing if he and Isa ever met!"

"They are not likely to meet, mother; Denzil has been too reckless ever to gain admittance into general society, and the Major knows enough of his career (though he has no idea of his passion for Isola) to shut his doors upon him."

"I know; but I don't feel easy, Lit."

"What are you afraid of?"

"I don't know. I dreamed of Isola last night, and she seemed to be in some great peril. Now, Lit, no danger for her could be so fearful as a meeting with Captain Denzil."

"I know."

"She has never asked any of us there—never even given a hint she would like to see us—and it makes me anxious."

"Well, here is the chance for me to set your mind at ease. You had better let me accept the Major's invitation."

"But the money?"

"It can all be done for five pounds, and I have that in my purse."

"Lit!"

"Don't look as if I had been stealing, mother; the money is honestly mine. You shall hear all about it some day. Well, may I write to the Major and tell him I shall be at Chepstow on Thursday afternoon?"

"So soon?"

"I think so. I can leave here on Tuesday by the night boat. That will give me all day Wednesday in London."

"What do you want to do?"

"No harm! I can sleep at old Anne's, mother, and you know you can trust me."

"Yes. You are not like my lovely Isa. You are quite able to take care of yourself! You look years older than you are!"

This was a libel. Lit looked no more than her age, twenty-two. She was of middle height, had a fresh, clear complexion, brown hair, and nice thoughtful grey eyes. She was the only one of the tribe who never alluded to "better days" and the high estate from which the family had fallen, and yet of all the nine sisters she had most the imprint of refinement. Lit might be shabby and look out of fashion, but her dress was always neat and becoming, and fitted her like a glove. She was twenty-two, and had never had a lover in her life; never had an existence apart from the rest of the tribe. Many people were fairly intimate with her sisters who had never seen her. She was proverbially the home one of the brood, and this journey to Monmouthshire was the first time she had tried her wings.

Old Anne had been nurse in the Travers' palmy days; she had married a grocer, and settled very comfortably in a street out of the Tottenham Court-road. Of all the children Miss Lit had been her favourite, and though there had been no meeting with

Mrs. Wilson for several years, the girl felt quite confident of a warm welcome.

And she received it. The buxom widow petted her nursing of other days, and wept over her in the heartiest fashion. Indeed, her manner was an alternate struggle between respect and affection. She had confided the shop to her assistant for the express purpose of receiving Lit, and yet it required the young lady's most strenuous persuasions to make her sit down to breakfast with her, as she declared she felt as if she were taking a liberty the whole time.

"It's rare times for me to get a sight of you, Miss Lit! You and Master Reginald were always my favourites. Not a bit of pride about either of you. If you'd believe me, Miss Lit, the young master took tea with me the very last night he was in England, and nothing would please him but I should run down to Gravesend to see him off. He said it made him feel less lonesome."

"Of course it did, you dear old thing. Oh! is it really ten o'clock? I must be going out. I have two or three places to call at."

"Is shopping you're after, Miss Lit?"

"Yes; selling, not buying, Anne! Don't you remember those letters you've taken in for me these last few months, and sent on in another envelope? Mother used so wonder why you wrote so often."

"I remember right enough, Miss Lit. I began to think you had got a lover of your own; and sure it's a wonder to me you weren't married long before Miss Isola, with all her airs and graces!"

"Isola is a beauty!" said Lit, simply; "and you know, nurse, I was always the ugly one!"

"I know nothing of the kind, Miss Lit—besides, 'handsome is as handsome does,' I think!"

"Well, I haven't got a lover, and I don't suppose I ever shall; but you know how poor we are, nurse, so it's delightful to have found out a way of earning money."

"Bless me, Miss Lit, you ought never to have to think of money at your age!"

"I have had to think of money all my life, nurse. You know I used to tell fairy tales to the tribe long ago. Well, it came into my head, one day, other people might like to read the things I was always dreaming about; and so I just put two or three of them down on paper, and —"

"And printed them!" gasped Mrs. Wilson. "Oh, Miss Lit, only to think of that!"

"Not at all, nurse! I didn't print them! I sold them the editor of a magazine, and he wrote to say if ever I were passing through London I was to call on him, as he thought he could give me an order for more."

"And that's where you're going now, Miss Lit?"

"Yes; and to see an old friend of mother's, nurse! I wonder what editors are like?"

"Much the same as other folks, only rather inky," suggested Mrs. Wilson, equably. "You'd better have a cab, Miss Lit, that can take you to the very door. It's much too cold for you to go wandering about!"

Lit felt her courage sinking into her shoes as the cab neared Fleet-street. She fully shared the fears of John Gilpin's wife as to being thought proud; so rather more than "three doors off" the horse "was stayed," and Lit, her precious manuscript in her hand, wandered down a very gloomy-looking court until she came to a house a little taller and more dismal looking than its fellows, which a large plate over the door informed her was the office of the "Royal London Monthly Paper."

Lit marched upstairs, her heart going pit-a-pat in the most unpleasant fashion. It was a more trying affair than soothing the irate landlord at home, or pleading with the baker not to cut off the family supply of rolls because his bill had been disregarded; but Lit went bravely on, and at last knocked at a door on the second floor inscribed Editor's

Room—a very small clerk opened it, and stared with youthful severity at Lit.

"You can't see Mr. Gordon, he's particularly engaged this morning!"

"I will wait!" returned Miss Travers, politely. "Perhaps you can take him my card, and say that I only came from France yesterday!"

The distance impressed the youth, and he condescended to take the card, which bore the *nom de plume* of Conilly; he also relented sufficiently as to usher Lit into a little room opposite where a bright fire was burning, and offer her a chair.

Miss Travers sat down and began to warm her feet; she was so comfortably engaged in this occupation that she was quite surprised when the summons came.

"Mr. Gordon will see you now, miss!"

Two gentlemen were in the sanctum, where Lit presently found herself; one, an elderly man, bowed with quiet civility, the other greeted her with hearty surprise.

"Miss Travers, is it possible?"

"Sir Guy Vernon!"

"Ah, Gordon!" said the Baronet to his manager, "I think you had better see some of your visitors in the next room; this young lady and I am old acquaintances, and I think I shall be more powerful even than you in securing her services for the Royal!"

The elderly individual hardly relished this address, but he vanished with great docility. Lit and the baronet found themselves alone.

"I don't understand!" said Lit, bewildered. "What have you got to do with Mr. Gordon?"

"Confidence for confidence, Miss Travers. As you use a *nom de plume* I fancy you don't want it known you dabble in literature. Well, I want the fact that I am the proprietor of a magazine to be kept secret, so I have Mr. Gordon to represent me before the public."

"Then the Royal belongs to you?"

"It does."

"I am so sorry."

"And why?"

"Mr. Gordon wrote to me so kindly, I had hoped I had a chance of—"

She stopped, Guy smiled.

"Gordon never wrote to you, Miss Travers. I wrote to 'Conilly,' and whatever promises I made her I am quite ready to redeem to you!"

"But you hate us, don't you know? Have you forgotten about—Captain Denzil?"

"I have not forgotten it!" returned Guy, quickly, "and my opinion of your sister has never changed. I regard Mrs. Merton as a disgrace to womanhood; but, Miss Travers, I know that you are made of different metal. I have only met you once before, but I would stake my word that you are loyal and true."

"I try to be."

"Well, let us forget your connection with Mrs. Merton and plunge into business. Do you know I think you have found your walk in life! The moment I read the November number of the Royal I wrote to Gordon and told him to hunt you up, and attach you to us if possible."

"I should like it dearly. Oh! Sir Guy, things have gone very badly at home lately. I have given up the hope of their ever getting better. If I can earn just a little, so as to make the children's life easier, that is all I want."

"Does not Mrs. Merton help you?"

"I do not think Isola realizes how we need help, and I am glad of it."

"Why?"

Lit shuddered. "I don't want to judge my sister hastily, but you have been behind the scenes; you know all."

"I suspect a good deal."

"You know that her marriage was one of interested motives. It seems to me, if Isola gave us her money, I should feel as if I had helped her to sell herself, and were sharing the price."

"I understand."

"I suppose you have seen a great deal of them since they went to the Park?"

"I have seen Mrs. Merton once. I was so unfortunate as to miss your brother; I called on him twice, but he was out, and though I asked him to dinner he refused my invitation. I thought it a little churlish."

"Do you mean Rex?"

"To be sure."

"But he was only in London two days," said Lit, simply; "he had so little money, you know, and it is a very expensive journey to Monmouthshire."

Guy looked troubled.

"Miss Travers, we are at cross purposes. Don't you ever hear from your sister?"

"Oh, yes. Isa writes sometimes. I am going to stay with them to-morrow; the Major asked me himself, in such a kind letter, I feel I can go without minding; he says he and Isa have a pleasant surprise for me. I wonder what it can be?"

"Really!"

"Your brother is at the Park; he has been there more than a month: that is why I thought it strange he declined my invitation, and never returned either of my calls."

"Reginald!"

"Of course he is the only one of your brothers I am acquainted with—a good fellow, Miss Travers, though his own enemy."

Lit had left her chair. She stood in front of Sir Guy with a white, scared face and trembling hands.

"There is some terrible mistake!"

"Not at all," said Guy, thinking she was trying to apologise for her brother's rudeness. "Of course, I understand your sister prejudiced him against me."

"But Rex never went to Merton Park; he sailed for Sydney just before Christmas. Oh, Sir Guy! He did, indeed!"

"But he is at the Park now, I assure you of it. No doubt Mrs. Merton persuaded him at the last moment to change his mind; anyway, he arrived at the Park on the twentieth of December. I remember the date well, because it was two days before I returned to Vernon Grange after a long absence. Depend upon it, Miss Travers, he did not like to write and tell you he had changed his mind. You will find him at the Park, and that is the pleasant surprise in store for you."

But Lit's colour did not return; the scared look lingered in her eyes.

"I am staying with our old nurse," she said, simply; "Mrs. Wilson. She has a little shop near the Tottenham Court-road, and she told me herself Rex would make her go to Gravesend to see him off!"

"That is strange, certainly; but I believe all the outward bound vessels call at Plymouth. He may have left the ship there!"

"I don't think he did."

Guy grew impatient.

"Miss Travers, what would you imply? I tell you your brother is at Merton Park, its master's honoured guest. He has been received by the whole county; has made himself generally popular, and is, rumour says, to marry Major Merton's ward, a young girl of large fortune and great beauty!"

Lit threw up her hands.

"Then I am right, and it cannot be my brother. Rex is engaged to a dear little creature—half French, half English—who lives near us. I know he would never have gathered up his courage and made such a sacrifice as to go to Australia but for the hope of making a home for his Eustace. She has been in Paris, staying with her grandfather, or I could tell you positively she heard from him from Plymouth, which would solve all doubts!"

She started. What had she said? What had happened? The fear in her own face was stamped now upon Sir Guy's. An anguish greater than words can describe was written on his brow. He half-staggered against the wall as he muttered,—

"Heaven help her, poor child!"

"Who?"

"Nell—Miss Charteris! I am certain she was on the eve of marriage with the man who passed as Reginald Travers!"

"Did you not see him?"

"I have told you I made several efforts to do so, and failed each time. Of course I understand it all now!"

"I don't!"

"You soon will. Your sister—I can't speak of her without loathing—trusting to the fact that her husband and her eldest brother had never met, to the fact of Mr. Travers being a stranger to Monmouthshire, introduced someone else in his character. I suppose I was the only person who could betray her, and she took care to keep her pretended brother secure from my inspection!"

"It is awful!"

"Terrible! What can the man be like who would steal into Major Merton's house under a false name? who would claim a position of intimacy with Mrs. Merton by pretending to her husband that he was her brother?"

Lit was speechless. For weeks she had cherished a dim foreboding that all was not right with Isola; but of such an awful deception as this she had never dreamed. It was too terrible!

"She is barely nineteen!" groaned Guy Vernon; "a perfect child. Just think what her life must be, linked to such a villain. Miss Travers, if you have any womanly compassion in your heart, you will go straight to Merton Park, expose the awful fraud that has been perpetrated, and save Miss Charteris while there is time!"

"I shall be at the Park to-morrow. I would go to-day, but there is no train now till the afternoon, and surely a day's delay can make no difference."

"I suppose not"—gloomily—"but I tremble for Miss Charteris!"

"And I grieve for Major Merton," said Lit, sadly. "He is just wrapped up in Isola. What will he feel when he knows how she has deceived him?"

"He must know it; the fraud cannot go on. Think of that poor child!"

"I do," said Lit, gravely. "No; I know that the Major must know all, and I will go to Monmouthshire to-day, if you insist upon it, but I would rather wait!"

"What difference can a day make?"

"Isola is very clever. She would know that the moment I reach the Park her plot must be discovered. I think she will find some way of dismissing the man she calls her brother before I get there!"

"And then—?"

"I will tell all to Miss Charteris. It is hard to expose one's sister"—here Lit sighed—"but I have no right to sacrifice another. Miss Charteris shall know all; only I should like, if it were possible, to spare the Major."

"And you will go to-morrow, whatever happens?" Mrs. Merton is quite capable of sending a telegram to stop you!"

"Isola does not know where I am. I will go to-morrow, at any cost. I am willing to start to-night, if you think it necessary."

"No," he admitted; "four-and-twenty hours' delay can hardly matter. Nell is not the girl to rush into matrimony with lightning speed, and their engagement is not a week old."

"Do you know her?"

"I have met her twice."

"And she is the Major's ward?"

"Yes, and an ardent admirer of your sister's. I'm afraid I behaved like a brute to her, poor little thing; but she was such a child. It seemed hard she should grow up like—like Mrs. Merton!"

There were tears in Lit's honest eyes.

"Isola would not have been so bad had she married Hugh Denzil!"

"He was a scoundrel!"

Lit hesitated.

"He was not a good man, but he loved her and she loved him. I think if they had been married the very strength of their love might

have purified their natures. Now that very love is their curse !

"Where is Denzil ?"

"He has been hunted from Monaco for failing to pay his debts of honour. Father said he didn't suppose there was a respectable man who would speak to him."

"Where is he now ?" persisted Sir Guy.

"I don't know."

"Is he in England ?"

"I should say so. I know he crossed from Beauville in the beginning of December; it was long after the Major and Isola had gone home. Mother felt thankful they were not in London, lest there should have been any fear of Captain Denzil and Isola meeting."

Sir Guy looked thoughtfully into the fire; he was asking himself a question which tortured him.

"Lit," he said suddenly, without the slightest consciousness he was calling the girl by her familiar home name, "I think you and I have the same fear. Tell me, what do you believe the false Mr. Travers's real name to be ?"

Lit kept silence, but her fingers played nervously with the fastenings of her jacket.

"Shall I put it differently? Don't you think that Captain Denzil has stolen your mother's name ?"

She bowed her head.

"We have no proof of it," went on the strong man, sadly; "but there are some things one feels sure of without proof, Lit;" and he laid one hand upon his heart. "Something tells me that Nell's lover is Reginald Denzil!"

A long pause fell on them. The court was a quiet one, but little frequented. The second floor was sacred to the editor of the "Royal" and his visitors.

Mr. Gordon, wondering at the length of his chief's interview with "Conilly," had gone to lunch, the boy-clerk was munching sandwiches in the little waiting room; there was a silence almost as of death in the room where Guy and Lit sat alone with her trouble.

To her life's end she never forgot that room. Years after she could have described its furniture to the minutest detail, but now she saw the man's face under its load of sorrow, its burden of pain.

He had never said a word betraying affection for Nell Charteris, had stated expressly he had only seen her twice; and yet Lit knew as well as possible that he loved her—that he would have sacrificed all he had in the world save her from falling a prey to Denzil.

There are women in the world who have never been beloved, who may never have felt the sacred passion themselves, and who can yet distinguish it at a glance in others—aye, and sympathize with it too. Such a one was Lit.

Very timidly she put one hand on Sir Guy Vernon's arm.

"Shall I go to Merton Park to-night? I think we are both so anxious the suspense will be hard to bear. I can just go back for my luggage, and be at Paddington in an hour."

Guy roused himself.

"It would be of no use. You would not be at the Park before ten. It would only create a needless scandal and disturbance. You had better keep to your original plan."

"And you ?"

"I am going home to-morrow, perhaps. You will allow me to be your escort? There is a fast train about ten. I will telegraph for a carriage to meet us; and, with your permission, will drive you to Merton Park."

"Thank you!"

She had risen, but she was trembling so terribly she could hardly stand.

"This has been too much for you," said Guy, kindly. "You are quite upset."

"I feel a pain here!" and she touched her heart. "Oh, Sir Guy! my father and mother are so proud of Isola! She is their favourite child! I think this will be their death-blow!"

"We must try and spare them! Miss Travers I wish I could help you in your troubles—I do, indeed!"

"You can!" said Lit, very sadly. "Promise me you won't think all women like this! Isola has been spoilt from infancy, and she was so pretty no one could help it. I think she threw away her last chance of becoming really happy when she jilted Captain Denzil. She has been perfectly reckless since. I know you have little call to pity her, only don't condemn all women just because one has erred!"

"I will never condemn you!" said Vernon, feelingly; "and now you must let me put you into a cab, and go home and rest! You are looking terribly white and tired!"

Mrs. Wilson was fairly frightened when she saw her nursing and guest. In vain Lit spoke of the fatigues of London, and the excitement of interviewing editors. The poor woman was not to be put off.

"You've had bad news, Miss Lit, and that's what it is!"

"Indeed, no nurse! I have not heard a word from home or from Rex, and I met a neighbour of Isola's, who says she is very well!"

"And you mean to go to Monmouthshire to-morrow? You look more fit to take to your bed than go rushing off on a long journey!"

"I must go!"—oh so weakly. "And, nurse, I have to catch the ten o'clock train, so I had better go to bed early!"

She looked very pale and tired the next morning; quite a contrast from the bright-faced girl who had left the French boat so full of hope. Mrs. Wilson openly bemoaned; but she was too fond of Lit to persist in her questions, and only begged her to remember that whatever happened she'd always "a come for her till better days dawned."

Lit clung to her humble friend, and kissed her very fondly before she got into the waiting cab.

She could not have put the feeling into words—only she seemed to know she would pass through troubled scenes before she saw that honest face again.

Sir Guy was waiting at the terminus to receive her, his servant behind him. The man took the luggage into his own charge, and Lit found herself walking forwards on the Baronet's arm. But for that awful foreboding at her heart she must have smiled to think of the little family. Cinderella on such intimate terms with the high and mighty Sir Guy Vernon. What would the "tribe" say could they see her preparing for a journey under such distinguished auspices?

"I have had a carriage reserved," said Guy, suddenly. "We could not stand the gossip of strangers this morning."

The guard held open the door of a roomy first-class carriage, meant, no doubt, to accommodate eight persons, but which Sir Guy, with reckless extravagance, had made his own, as the placard "engaged" on the window testified.

Lit was comfortably installed in one corner, with a warm rug over her, and a hot-water tin for her feet. A basket of hothouse grapes, a bundle of newspapers, and a reading novel, showed Sir Guy had not been unmindful of his companion.

"We wait five minutes at Reading, and ten at Gloucester, sir," said the guard, officially. "No need to disturb you except at those stations, I suppose."

They were fairly off. Neither made the slightest attempt at conversation. Sir Guy buried his face in a newspaper. Lit closed her eyes and seemed to sleep. Really, every nerve of her body was aching with dread of the scene which lay before her.

Sir Guy brought her a glass of wine at Reading, which she drank almost mechanically, and then they exchanged their first words since the train started.

"When are we due at Chepstow?"

"Three o'clock!"

"Then we shall be at the Park by four."

"Yes; but we shall be too late!"

Lit gasped.

"Too late!"

"Don't ask me why. Don't tell me I am mistaken," cried Guy, wildly. "I know within myself that we are too late. Even now Nell Charteris is beyond our aid."

Poor Lit. Sleep was impossible. Her tongue refused all attempts at conversation. She just leaned back in her corner mechanically, and longed for the time to pass more quickly, in spite of the trial awaiting her when she reached the Park.

Her very heart felt sick with yearning to be there. Anything on earth was better than this suspense—this awful forced inaction, when she could do nothing but gaze vacantly on the blank despair of her companion's face.

"We must be going very slowly," she said at last, when the tediousness of their progress seemed beyond what her own feverish impatience would account for.

"I wonder where we are? We can't be very far from Gloucester."

Sir Guy went to the window.

"Just outside a tunnel, and we seem to have come to a dead stop. I suppose we're waiting for a train to pass us."

"Then there it comes! I hear it."

Aye, she heard a train coming, but it did not pass them. There was some fatal mistake in the signals. A short goods' train had run into the one by which Sir Guy and his charge were travelling.

A violent collision occurred almost as Lit ceased speaking. She felt a violent jerk, and then fell forwards on her face. Sir Guy shared the same fate. The two who were speeding to aid Nell Charteris, and warn her of her danger, lay senseless on the floor of the shattered railway carriage.

(To be continued.)

BOUND NOT TO MARRY.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN Hugh opened his eyes after his long sleep, they rested upon the face of Eleanor, who had taken up her position not far from his side, and the faint smile of recognition told her and the others, who were watching, that consciousness had returned, and the fever had left him.

He murmured her name softly; and when she came close to him he said in a low tone,—

"Kiss me."

She did so, her heart almost bursting meanwhile, not knowing if this was a kiss of parting or of re-union.

Then his mother came forward, looking from her dress as though she were at home; and, weak as he was, tears came into his eyes as he placed Eleanor's hand in hers, thus expressing his desire that they should be friends. Fortunately for them all the doctors interfered.

They believed that with great care their patient would recover now he had taken a favourable turn; and they gave him such nourishment as he could swallow, enjoining absolute quiet; and, for the time, banished Mrs. Darrel and Eleanor from the room.

It was with great reluctance they obeyed, but the doctors were peremptory.

Mrs. Pritchard and the nurse might remain to watch and tend the sick man; but they insisted that Eleanor should go to her own room and sleep; and they told Mrs. Darrel that if her son were in any way excited, and had a return of the fever, the consequence must be fatal.

This induced her to yield to their suggestion that she should go to bed and sleep until the morning, and she mentally resolved that she would say some kind words to Eleanor on the first opportunity, which would make her feel that she approved of her son's choice.

The young lady's surname she had not yet heard, but her heart would have been hard,

indeed, if it had not been touched by the love and devotion which had, undoubtedly, saved Hugh's life.

So great and favourable an impression had Eleanor's appearance and manner made upon the proud woman, that she was herself surprised at the calm way in which she received the information, which Charlie Rowe on the following morning thought it best to give her.

He had come to inquire after his friend, and to see if he could be of any use; and Mrs. Pritchard, who feared there might still be a scene between Eleanor and Hugh's mother, requested him to talk to Mrs. Darrel, and explain exactly how matters stood.

Rowe's experience in stating his own position with regard to Inez had been so unpleasant that he would rather have been spared a repetition; but Mrs. Pritchard asserted that there was none to do it but herself and him, and she said she was afraid, if provoked, she should lose her temper, and say things it would be difficult to forgive, and impossible to forget.

So Charlie Rowe at length consented to tell Mrs. Darrel whose house it was in which she was now staying, and it is not too much to say that he expected a violent explosion of temper when she received the information. As nothing happens but the unexpected Charlie was agreeably surprised, when, after having made his communication, Mrs. Darrel flushed and frowned; and then, controlling herself with an effort, she sighed and said,—

"Well, I suppose it is all for the best. She is a beautiful girl, and they love each other!"

"There cannot be much doubt about that!" assented Rowe; "and if anything will hasten Darrel's recovery it will be the assurance that you approve his choice of a wife."

Mrs. Darrel slightly winced at this.

To say that she approved was carrying her complaisance a very long way, though she was ready to yield much where the life and happiness of her son was at stake.

But although Hugh Darrel was tended so carefully by the hands of love, many long weary days elapsed before he was able to leave his room; and the trees about Hampstead were budding, and tender green leaves were unfolding in the spring sunshine when he went for his first drive.

After this his recovery became more rapid, though the doctors said it would be a very long while before he regained his usual health and strength.

He seemed in no great hurry about it, however. Perhaps he dreaded that when he ceased to be regarded as an invalid some of the old jealousies and resentments would begin to show themselves between Eleanor and his mother. But in this he was quite mistaken.

Mrs. Darrel was quite reconciled to the idea of Eleanor Rosevear becoming her daughter-in-law.

Nay, she was rather proud of her son's choice, and she would have greatly resented the insinuation had anybody ventured to make it—that it was an unsuitable match.

Indeed, when she came to think of the matter dispassionately, she was generous enough to admit that Eleanor was making a sacrifice in disregarding the will which bound her not to marry. For, although by marrying Hugh the wealth she forfeited would come to him, to a woman of Mrs. Darrel's temperament, there was a vast distinction between having money in her own right and having it by the favour, pleasure, or whim of her husband.

What did trouble Mrs. Darrel, however, was the marriage which Inez Woodfall was about to make; for she felt that she had not properly discharged her trust in giving her ward the opportunity of becoming engaged to Charlie Rowe.

She had nothing to say against Rowe personally; but his position and prospects, and even his family, were such drawbacks, that she would have prevented the match had it been possible.

But Inez could be as resolute as herself, particularly now she was free from the restraint of a guardian; and Eleanor, who liked Charlie Rowe, sympathized with Inez, and it was not long before Hugh was won round to say that he thought the union would be good for both of them.

He had great faith in Rowe's talent and industry, and he fully believed that a wealthy wife would ensure his success in his profession, while his success must be for her benefit.

For this wedding there were great preparations, and although Inez was fond of Rowe, she did not take warmly to his relatives, so she was glad to accept Eleanor's invitation to come to Frogland, and be married from her house.

Mrs. Darrel also thought this a desirable arrangement, and in due time preparations for the wedding were made, Eleanor having promised to be the principal bridesmaid, and Hugh the best man.

At Eleanor's desire, Rowe tried to find Florry Trefusis, with the intention of inviting her to her own wedding. But he was unsuccessful in his search, though he learnt sufficient about her to justify his remark that she was not worth seeking, as she had been seen travelling on the continent with the Count di Talmino.

When Eleanor heard this she turned away, sad of heart, and grieved beyond the power of words to express.

Now she understood who it was that had written and delivered that letter which had warned them of Hugh's danger, and had enabled them to rescue him in time to save his life.

"Poor Florry!" she sighed, "poor Florry; what a misfortune for you that you and the Count ever met."

By tacit consent Rowe and Eleanor decided not to say anything to the others about Florry's probable fate, and the young artist was too busy in buying a house and furnishing it, and in preparing for his marriage with Inez, to bestow much thought upon a girl who had never greatly interested him.

As soon as Inez was married Mrs. Darrel proposed to return to Witherleigh, and to take her son with her.

But Hugh objected to this scheme. He did not intend his own engagement to be a long one, for he rightly judged that Eleanor would feel very solitary when they were all gone.

The doctors had advised him to seek change of air and scene as soon as he could do so, and he had quite made up his mind to go on a long tour in the south of Europe, but he had not the least intention of travelling alone.

He said nothing about this at present, for Inez's wedding occupied most of the attention of the ladies, and nothing else could be settled until that was over.

The wedding day soon came, however, and Hugh Darrel was still too weak from his wound, and the fever which came with it, to be able to stand at the altar rails without looking pale and feeling ready to faint.

But the ceremony was not a long one. The bride—as is usual on such occasions—looked her very best, and the bridegroom appeared at his worst, which is likewise not unfrequent; but their strict morning dress for a gentleman is not picturesque, while nature must indeed have been chary of her gifts to any woman who does not look well in creamy satin, lace and orange blossoms.

As a matter of fact, the most lovely woman in the church was Eleanor Rosevear.

People craned their necks to get a good view of her, and the attractions of the bride were forgotten when she was observed.

Thanks to the necessity of being married by twelve o'clock at noon—so soon about to change—the wedding breakfast was over, and the happy couple had set off upon their honeymoon by three o'clock; and Eleanor, worn out with fatigue, sought a little rest and privacy in the seclusion of her boudoir.

She had not been here many minutes before Mrs. Darrel tapped at the door and joined her.

"My dear Nellie," said the elder woman graciously, "you have made your house a home to us all, but the time has come when we must go away, and I want you to go with us. I propose going down to Darrel Court with you and my son, and that your marriage shall take place there."

But Eleanor shrank as though she had received a blow, then she said,—

"No. I never wish to see Darrel Court again except I go there as Hugh's wife. Don't ask me to go before."

It would not have been true to Mrs. Darrel's temper or character to feel anything but impatient with this rejoinder, but she restrained the expression of her feelings, and said calmly and quietly,—

"Very well, my dear; you must do as you like, of course. But Hugh cannot remain here any longer, the doctors say he must have change. I want a change also. I want to go home to my own place, where I have no doubt things are going to rack and ruin, so you must make up your mind either to marry and go abroad with him at once, or I must run down to my own place for a day or two, and then start with him as his travelling companion."

"And leave me here?" asked Eleanor in dismay.

"Well, go with him. I would much rather you did so, and I need not say that he desires it," said the mother, smiling.

"But what shall I do about Mrs. Pritchard?" asked Eleanor, "and then you will be likewise alone," she objected.

"Mrs. Pritchard and I have decided all that," was the answer. "She will come and live with me when you are married, and we might arrange to meet you and Hugh abroad. I am particularly anxious to go to Venice this year."

"Yes," assented Eleanor, slowly, "if Hugh wishes it, of course."

Then she paused, and Mrs. Darrel rose to leave the room, saying,—

"Then Hugh had better speak for himself."

As she went to seek her son, she could not help wondering at the change that had come over herself.

She, who had been furious at the suggestion that Hugh should marry this girl; she who in her anger had said everything that was bitter and disdainful of her, and who had even gone so far as to say that she would rather see her son dead than he should become the husband of Eleanor Rosevear, was now hastening on the marriage which she had most violently opposed.

But then her son had been close to the very border-land of death, and Eleanor it was who had held him back.

While fond of her own opinion as she was, Mrs. Darrel could not but admit that she had formed a very false and erroneous estimate of Eleanor Rosevear's person and character.

Soon after his mother had left it, Hugh Darrel came to the boudoir.

He was looking pale and languid. The excitement of the morning, and the number of people with whom he had had to talk, had been too much for him, and Eleanor was at once alarmed. As an invalid he had received very much more attention, and certainly more caresses, than under other circumstances would have fallen to his share, and now he had very little difficulty in persuading Eleanor to fix one day in the following week for their wedding.

"And we will not have any of the senseless parade that took place to-day," he says, wearily. "We will go to church to be made man and wife, to have the legal and moral right to spend our lives together, and then we will go off to the South of France and to Italy, and live for each other. Perhaps, also, we may live to do some good work in the world. Now I am relieved from the necessity of thinking about money I feel a strong desire to turn out one really good painting."

She bends and kisses his forehead. At this moment she is proud of him. No

good and thoughtful woman likes to feel that the man she loves is a useless, being without aim or purpose in life, living upon the toil of others, reaping where he does not sow, and leaving the world at last no better than he found it—nay, worse, perhaps—from the fact of his having lived in it.

A woman may love such a man, but in her heart she despises him, and love in such a case is strongly mingled with contempt.

Therefore Eleanor felt proud of Hugh, and encouraged him in his idea of doing some good sterling work in the world, and she readily agreed to his suggestion that their marriage should be as quiet and unpretending as it was possible to be.

So quiet was it, when it did take place, that Mitcham did not know of her mistress's intention until, on her return from church, she saw the wedding-ring upon her finger.

She knew that she was going abroad, and she had arranged to accompany her; but she did not know that it was as Mrs. Hugh Darrel that she was going to start.

Not that the maid objected to wait upon a married lady—far from it—particularly as Mr. Darrel's valet was such a very polite young man, that travelling in such good company could not fail to be delightful, and Mitcham's congratulations were most certainly sincere.

The happiness of the newly-married couple had no drawback, except that Hugh was still weak from his long illness, and a few hours after their return from church they started on their journey in quest of health.

In their case the search was not in vain.

That blessing, greater far than wealth, came to Hugh Darrel on the shores of the Mediterranean, and when his mother and Mrs. Pritchard joined them in Venice some two months later, they were very agreeably surprised by the marked improvement in Hugh which had already taken place.

After a brief sojourn here they mean to turn their faces homeward, for even in queenly Venice they dream of Darrel Court, and of the wild, rugged coast upon which it stands.

But one scene more, and then let the curtain fall.

It is a glorious morning in Venice, and a gondola, evidently belonging to one of the nobility, attracts the attention of the Darrels by the gorgeousness of its appointments and the handsome dress of the gondoliers.

As they watch it they see it come to the steps of a palace near which they are standing; and Eleanor, with natural curiosity, looks with interest at the face of the lady who is about to land.

Is it possible? Can she credit her own senses? Is it Florry Trefusis who stands there, richly arrayed, with an air of pride in her bearing that is new to her, but with so much sadness and half-repressed terror in her countenance that makes an observer wonder if she is quite sane?

Eleanor involuntarily utters an exclamation of surprise, and, turning to her husband, says in an excited tone,

"Look Hugh, is that Florry?"

Her voice is not loud, but it reaches the Count di Talmino, who is with his wife, and is standing on the side of the boat, almost in the act of stepping ashore.

The familiar and never-to-be-forgotten voice acts upon him like an electric shock.

He turns sharply and meets, not the face of the woman he has loved, but that of Hugh Darrel, the man whom he thought he had murdered.

Naturally superstitious, and with the cowardice born of guilt, he thinks that it is a ghost that is pursuing him, and he starts back with terror.

A heavy splash as he falls into the water, accompanied by a cry from himself or his wife—none can say which—brings many to his rescue, and his body is quickly dragged into the gondola.

He has not had time to drown, but blood is flowing from the back of his head, where it had struck the sharp edge of a stone in his fall, and Victor di Talmino never moves or speaks again.

Eleanor, guessing what thoughts had been passing through his mind, hesitates to step forward and push her way through the crowd; and when, on the following day, she writes to Florry, expressing her sympathy, and offering to come and see her, she receives in reply a brief, cold note, declining the visit.

So, with much wonder and some sadness, the travellers start on their way back to England, without seeking to penetrate the mystery in which she whom they had known as Florry Trefusis had shrouded herself.

[THE END.]

HIS QUAKER BRIDE.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

VALENTINE CURZON had gone out on no more important business than the choice of a bouquet, intended for a certain pretty, dark-eyed actress, with whom he had fallen harmlessly in love from the boxes. He was in love about once a month, on an average, with some fresh enchantress, seeming neither the better nor the worse for his many amours—the result of being idle, impressionable, young, and wealthy all at once.

Meanwhile, his luxuriously-furnished rooms in Bond-street were being taken by storm. During his brief absence, curious, disapproving, astonished feminine eyes were scanning his domain—feminine minds were trying to arrive at some idea as to what the owner of such rooms could possibly be like.

"Verily, Ruth, if thy cousin's apartment truthfully reflects his character and tastes, we might have spared ourselves the trouble of calling upon him. I fear that we shall have but little in common beyond our relationship. My sister's son is evidently a man of the world."

The speaker was an old lady, looking in her severely simple Quaker attire not unlike a pure, flawless, delicate piece of Dresden china.

She was small and slight, with snow-white hair, regular features, bright, pale, clear blue eyes, and a complexion that still retained its healthy, youthful bloom, thanks to frugal living and early hours.

Her dress displayed that blending of simplicity and quiet richness which always distinguished a Quakeress of the old school.

Rachael Hargrave's grey silk might have stood alone, its texture was so thick and costly. Her white cashmere shawl was of the finest ever woven, her large white straw bonnet, unadorned save for a piece of watered ribbon, that cost more than anyone would imagine, being of the best make and quality.

Her companion was a girl of eighteen, dressed in modified Quaker attire. Grey formed the key-note of her dress, as it were, yet it was tastefully draped, and trimmed with just a suspicion, or dim tint, of pale blue about it.

The girl herself was tall and slender, with large, limpid, long-lashed gray eyes, a pure, pale complexion, and quantities of pale, soft, golden hair, neatly plaited beneath her small, close-fitting bonnet.

Ruth Inglefield was the personification of beautiful, passionate, unawakened girlhood—serene, flower-like, unconscious of her own loveliness, or of the power it must needs give her, sooner or later, over the hearts of men.

She glanced round this unknown cousin's sitting-room with all her aunt's curiosity, but without her condemning spirit.

In London for the first time, fresh from an out-of-the-way picturesque Cornish village,

all that she saw and heard had for her the charm of novelty.

Ruth felt inclined to bless those May Meetings at Exeter Hall which had induced her aunt to come to them after an absence of more than twenty years.

"Perhaps, Aunt Rachael, Cousin Valentine may have been called out in a hurry, and he had not time to put his room in order before he went? What a quantity of pipes and riding-whips he seems to possess!"

"It is not so much the disorder I object to," said Aunt Rachael, severely, "although that is unseemly enough. It is the character of my nephew's surroundings; they savour too much of frivolity and worldliness, Ruth."

"The servant said he would not be long away," urged the girl, timidly, fearful lest her aunt should decide to beat an immediate retreat. "He may prove more satisfactory than—than his belongings!"

"That is true. We should judge no one hastily, Ruth. Sit down and wait awhile. He may return soon, and I should be sorry to miss seeing dear Miriam's boy. Go away, dog! go away! Ruth, child, didst ever see a creature so repulsive?"

The glorious May sunlight was streaming full into the large, handsome room, revealing the chaos composed of a young man's heterogeneous belongings.

A velvet smoking-cap and a well-coloured meerschaum lay upon the table, together with letters, circulars, half-a-dozen pairs of gloves, impatiently discarded because in want of mending, and a yellow-backed novel. A confusion of glasses and decanters, pipes and cigars, adorned the sideboard. There were photo frames on the mantelpiece, containing the likenesses of various pretty actresses, with each and all of whom Val Curzon had, at some time, been in love.

His sporting tendencies evinced themselves in a variety of ways. Sporting prints being upon the walls, together with portraits of Archer and Fordham. Sporting papers lay scattered about in every direction. A perfectly ugly ball-dog had aroused Aunt Rachael's fears by sniffing at her, while a white smooth-haired terrier and her three pups occupied a basket near the fireplace.

It was essentially a man's room, although the piano, some lovely Sévres vases filled with flowers, choice statuettes, and a few warm, luscious, glowing landscapes in oils indicated redeeming qualities and higher tastes on the part of the absent and erring Val.

"The dog is not savage, Aunt," said Ruth, fearlessly patting "Jem's" ugly head, upon which "Miggs"—anxious to call attention to the charms of her family—immediately scrambled out of her basket, and joined in the friendly overtures.

"A French novel!" exclaimed Aunt Rachael, cautiously turning over one of Val's books as if she more than half expected it to burn her fingers. "That a nephew of mine should read such things, and—yes, actually, a pack of cards on the sideboard! Ruth, I regret having brought thee here. I will leave a note for thy cousin Valentine, and we will stay no longer. If he has a desire to see us, he can call at our lodgings."

"But, Aunt Rachael—"

"Nay, child! I will listen to no remonstrances. This is no place for either you or me. Were your cousin to come in he might give us both but a cold welcome, since we belong, as it were, to different spheres."

Ruth looked disappointed. She had wished to meet Val Curzon, why, she hardly knew, unless it was that her quiet unevenful life rendered any fresh incident welcome.

His pipes and novels and other shortcomings had served rather to increase her interest in him than to diminish it. They were very dreadful, of course. They filled her with a kind of awe.

None the less Ruth was conscious of a strong desire to become acquainted with the owner of these vanities.

Aunt Rachael produced a tract from her

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reticule, and wrote a stiff little note on the blank half-page at the back.

Placing the tract on the table where it could not fail to attract notice, she turned to go, followed by Rath, Jim and Miggs accompanying them to the door, as if anxious to do the honour in canine fashion during their master's absence.

"Do you know any of those ladies whose likenesses were on the mantelpiece in Valentine's room, aunt?" asked Ruth, gravely, as they went along.

"Certainly not," said Aunt Rachael, drily. "I should advise thee to dismiss thy cousin from thy mind altogether, Ruth. We are not likely to see or hear any more of him."

The demure, rigid Quakeress was feeling hurt and disappointed. Miriam Brace had been her favourite sister, many years younger than herself, and Miriam had married John Curzon, a wealthy merchant, who did not belong to the Society of Friends, thus separating himself, to a great extent, from her family.

Soon after giving birth to twin sons Miriam had died. Then her husband became bankrupt, one loss following another in quick succession. His combined misfortunes proved too much for the unhappy man. He followed his wife to the grave in less than a year, leaving his boys totally unprovided for.

A Curzon who had settled at New York took one, and promised to provide for him as he grew older. The other, Val, had remained with Rachael Hargrave till he was received into the Blue Coat School. From that time he had been lost to her.

His godfather, a wealthy stockbroker, had taken Val to France, paid his college expenses, and granted him a liberal allowance. Then, just as he was thinking of walking the hospitals, prior to becoming a doctor, Val's godfather had died, leaving him the sum of twenty thousand pounds.

This had unsettled the young man. Instead of devoting himself assiduously to the profession he had chosen, he went in for any amount of pleasure, intending to work hard some day, but just for the present to have his fun and enjoy life thoroughly.

Money sometimes is a greater curse than the want of it. Men like Val Curzon are best off without it, since they will never work hard to develop their faculties unless the sharp spur of want drives them to do so.

Having seen or heard nothing of her nephew for many years, Rachael Hargrave had come to town as much for the purpose of visiting him as of attending the May Meetings. A sharp pang of regret had gone through her on beholding the frivolous, worldly nature of his every-day surroundings.

She had been so fond of him as a boy, she had wished to keep him with her, and bring him up as a Friend. But for that worldly-wise, stockbroking godfather, of whom the little old Quaker could but think bitterly, Val might have become a very different man.

Having selected his bouquet—a costly one wrapped in lace-paper—Val Curzon went home to write the note that was to accompany it.

He was a good-looking *debonair* young fellow, with dark expressive grey eyes and a drooping moustache. Far from being languid or *blast*, his manner was terse and animated. Life for him was no even-cut plaything, but a gay reality, a constant source of thoughtless enjoyment, which he seemed to abuse or wish himself rid of. There was no affectation about Val Curzon. Clever, handsome, pleasure-loving, addicted to looking more than he really felt when women were in question, he gave the world full credit for all the enjoyment it afforded him, and openly avowed his profound satisfaction with things in general when any metaphysical or aesthetic grumbler threw cold water over his creed, and sneered at him for not joining the great army of malcontents.

Whistling an air from the *Mikado* Val

entered his sunny sitting-room. The dogs welcomed him noisily, but he failed to understand the meaning they wished to convey.

"Down Miggs, down Jim! Confound those puppies, they've gnawed one of my riding gloves to pulp! Why don't you teach your family to behave better, old lady? Now for Lottie Moselle's note. I wonder—Why, what the deuce is this?"

He had caught sight of Aunt Rachael's tract propped up against a china basin full of fragrant narcissus.

Taking it up he turned it over and red the pencilled lines, traced in Aunt Rachael's delicate Italian hand:—

"NEPHEW VALENTINE.—I had thought to have the pleasure of seeing thee once more, after so long a parting. For this purpose I came here this morning with thy second cousin, Ruth Inglefield, who is in town with me, that she may profit by the May Meetings held at Exeter Hall. Thou wast from home, however, and—if a man may be judged by his surroundings—had it been otherwise, the visit might only have given rise to mutual regret and embarrassment. Should you experience a desire to greet thy relatives, Ruth and I are staying with Martha Browning in Verney-street, Bloomsbury, and we shall remain there until the end of May. If you have no wish to recognise the old ties, be sincere enough to stay away. You will receive no blame from your affectionate aunt,

"MARTHA HARGRAVE."

An annoyed expression flitted across the young man's face as he carefully folded the tract and looked round the room swiftly and furtively. It had been mute evidence against him. Who would have thought of those women coming up to town so unexpectedly?

Aunt Martha had been very kind to him as a boy, and he knew that he had neglected her shamefully of late. It annoyed him to think that she had a pre-conceived prejudice against him, all through that confounded room, which he might have toned down a little had he been aware of the visit in store for him.

Of Ruth Inglefield he knew nothing. She had only come to live with her aunt within the last five years.

Then the ridiculous aspect of the affair suddenly struck him, and Val laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks as, in imagination, he saw the aunt and niece surveying his untidy apartment, and passing judgment upon it from a Quaker point of view.

"I must call upon them this afternoon, and try to remove the unfavourable impression already created," was his next thought. "Poor, kind, good Aunt Rachael, who wanted to bring me up in her own persuasion and make a broadbrim of me. What must she have thought of my diggings here! Jim, you villain, I hope you didn't show your teeth at the ladies. If you could only tell me what they said!"

"Are you out or at home, Curzon?" drawled a languid voice, as a small, fair-haired, faultlessly-dressed little man, with eyelids three sizes too large for him, entered the room, pausing for an instant upon the threshold.

"At home, my dear boy! Come in and shut the door! Have you been here before this morning?"

"Do I ever inflict myself upon society at unearthly hours? What a question! It implies the recent presence of other visitors. Were they duns or beggars?"

"Neither; ladies."

Algy Cavendish shook his head cunningly as he dropped into an easy chair and helped himself to a cigar.

"Worse and worse," he remarked sorrowfully. "Curzon, some day, unless you mend your ways, *mon ami*, you'll find yourself up to the neck in breach of promise cases."

"Stuff! The ladies in this case were my aunt and cousin. Of course they were bound to arrive when I was out, and—and," with a comprehensive sweep of the arm, "they drew their own conclusions, you know. They

belong to the Society of Friends, and I'm afraid their opinion of me, according to this note, is a poor one."

Algy took the tract as if it were some rare curiosity, and gravely read Aunt Rachael's note aloud.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"Call on them this afternoon, and invite them to have tea with me in bachelor style tomorrow. Nothing like taking the bull by the horns, old man. Will you come and help keep me in countenance?"

"I'll do what I can to spare your blushes, and prevent you from feeling overwhelmed. Are—are both your relatives elderly, Curzon?"

"One is, the other I have never seen."

"Indeed! I would advise a little judicious weeding of your household stuff before the guests arrive. Plainly speaking, your rooms are not in good form, Curzon. They contain a wild conglomeration of everything—you might be horsey, artistic, bookish, or theatrical. You have surrounded yourself with the outward tokens of each. Such myriad-mindedness is apt to mystify strangers."

"Wait till to-morrow," said Val, triumphantly, "and I'll show you a transformation scene that shall do credit to my 'myriad-mindedness,' Algy."

CHAPTER II.

"I SHOULD not have known you again, nephew Valentine, you are so altered, and you have grown so tall," said Aunt Rachael, subjecting the young man to a calm searching scrutiny as he sat opposite to her in Martha Browning's drawing-room that afternoon. "It is quite astonishing to me how tall you have grown. Your father was under the middle height."

She dropped the "thee" and "thou" when speaking to those who were not of her own persuasion. Val laughed, and coloured furiously. A man of five-and-twenty does not care to be told how much he has "grown," especially when a pretty girl is present.

"As if I were a great, awkward, hobbled-hoy of eighteen," he reflected indignantly. Then aloud,—

"You know the old proverb, Aunt Rachael: 'Ill weeds grow space.'"

"I hope that you are not an ill weed," said Aunt Rachael seriously. "It is no jesting matter, nephew. Pleased as I am to see you again, and to find that you have still a little affection left for me, I must confess that I am far from satisfied with you in many respects. I was always a plain-spoken woman, as you know. Why are you frittering away your time in every sort of youthful folly, when you ought to be acquiring a knowledge of medicine, since you have chosen the healing art as your profession?"

Val waxed pathetic.

"I have not wasted much time yet," he replied in self-defence. "I want to see a little of the world before settling down to hard work as a doctor; it is only natural. A knowledge of the world, you know, is indispensable to a medical man."

"Verily, nephew Valentine, am I to understand that you will set bones and cure diseases so much the more skilfully by reason of your acquaintance with cards, French novels, and horse-racing?" said Aunt Rachael pitilessly. "Methinks they are strange and unworthy means by which to attain your end."

"I am not such a feather-brained fellow as you imagine," replied Val, with unblushing effrontry. "Lots of those things you saw in my room when you called belong to a friend of mine who has been staying with me lately. My own tastes are of the quietest description possible. I can assure you of this if you and Cousin Ruth will accept a bachelor's invitation, and take tea with me to-morrow. If you refuse, Aunt Rachael, I shall think that you have formed a bad opinion of the nephew you were so kind to as a boy."

Rachael Hargrave hesitated. Should she

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accept the invitation, or not? Her heart yearned over Miriam's boy, in spite of his manifest shortcomings.

Then she decided to go. Supposing him to be somewhat wild and frivolous, the more need of serious conversation and well-meant interference.

She would give him as much of her society as possible while she remained in town.

"Since you wish it, Valentine, we will come," she said, in a less severe tone; "but pray go to no unnecessary expense on our account. Ruth and I never indulge in luxuries."

"Ruth must be anxious to see more of London," remarked Val, turning towards the silent girl, in the hope of inducing her to join in the conversation.

She sat there listening intently, but saying scarce anything. Yet her silence did not strike him as being the result of stupidity or dulness.

It was an intelligent shyness, that time and tact would speedily change into eager, animated intercourse.

"We have not come to London for the purpose of seeing sights, nephew," corrected Aunt Rachael. "When the May meetings are over we shall return to our home."

"But you really must let me take you about a little, you know," pleaded Val, rendered eloquent by the disappointment in Ruth's soft grey eyes. "There are the parks and the public buildings. Ruth would like to see these, I'm sure. Oh, yes, and the Inventions Exhibition—a very quiet sort of thing that, Aunt Rachael. You may meet clergymen there by the score."

"Nevertheless, I do not think I shall go. I am too old to go about much myself, and Ruth has been brought up to care but little for such things. It is not often that we shall require an escort, Valentine—unless you would like to go with us occasionally to Exeter Hall."

"I'll think about it; but I won't promise," said Val, hastily. "Are you staying here with friends, Aunt Rachael?"

"No. Martha Browning is an old servant of mine. She took this house when she got married to a butler, and they let apartments. Fortunately, her drawing-room apartments chanced to be empty when we came to town, and she was delighted to have us with her again."

"I see. It is rather a dull street."

"It is quiet, and on that account it suits me very well. When did you last hear from your brother in America, Valentine?"

Val's face clouded suddenly.

"You have not heard, then?" he said, gravely. "Of course, how should you? Poor Fred turned out rather wild, it appears. Gave his uncle no end of trouble, and left New York three years ago with debts enough to swamp him. He went to Mexico, it is believed, where he was scalped by those Indians brutes while making his way up the country with several other white men. Poor old Fred! We knew next to nothing of each other, through being parted so early in life, yet the news gave me a terrible shock at the time. It was such a miserable ending for him!"

"Miserable indeed!" said Aunt Rachael, sadly. "I hope it will be a lesson to you, Valentine, not to follow in his footsteps!"

"So far as Mexico and the Indians go I certainly shan't," said Val, gravely. "I can only remember Fred as a gallant little chap in pinafores. Since his death I have often wished that we had exchanged photos."

"I have a small water-colour likeness of you both upstairs, taken when you were about three years old. I brought it to town with me, because it wants a little skilful retouching by a portrait-painter. I will fetch it for you to see. At that age it was difficult to distinguish you from your brother Frederick!"

As Rachael Hargrave left the room to fetch the treasured portrait, Val turned towards Ruth with a sudden accession of interest.

A girl who seemed unconscious of her own

beauty, who did nothing to challenge masculine admiration, was, to say the least of it, deserving of notice as a fresh experience, and Val was fond of a new sensation.

Yet he could not for the life of him address Ruth in the easy caressing tone of incipient flirtation that he was sure to fall into with other lovely women, to whom he did graceful homage.

She was not proud or stately, yet her pure, passionless, unconscious beauty seemed to call for something bordering closely upon reverence. *Persiflage* would have seemed flippant and out of place as addressed to her.

Val Curzon felt this dimly, and he treated her with a kind of gentle deference. She reminded him of spring flowers, with their chastened delicate loveliness, of Sabbath bells, of all things pure and good and holy.

Lottie Roselle and her vivacious sisterhood faded from his mind as he bent over the young quakeress, till his moustache nearly brushed the pale gold of her hair.

"Ruth—Cousin Ruth! I may call you that, may I not?"

"I suppose so," she replied, simply, with a little increase of colour to her clear face. "As you say, we are cousins!"

"And on that account we ought to be good friends. Are you quite as indifferent to all the sights of London as Aunt Rachael would have me believe?"

A longing look danced in the girl's starry eyes.

"Oh, no! That is, Aunt Rachael does not wish me to care for such things," she said, hurriedly. "But I should very much like to see more of London before we go back to Penwy. It is very, very dull down there! I have been looking forward to this visit for months, and now it has come it seems so disappointing. We never go out, except to a meeting. I ought not to complain, but—but it is so tantalising to be in London and to go nowhere. I should like to see the Tower, and Westminster Abbey—and to walk over London Bridge!"

Val stifled a smile in its birth. Ruth's longings were of such a modest, simple nature, poor child, as compared with those of many other young people in town for the first time.

"I think we ought to be able to compass that," he said, gently. "Aunt Rachael must intrust you to me now and then, Ruth, and give me leave to take you about. I shall insist upon it. Meetings are all very well; but at your age! Cousins are almost the same as brothers and sisters, you know, so she can't possibly object to me as an escort. You shall go to Westminster Abbey, and see Poets' Corner, where all the great guns are buried; and then pictures—are you fond of pictures?"

"Yes, very; but I have seen so few, and I have hardly read any books, save religious ones. Aunt Rachael does not approve of poetry or fiction. I am afraid you will find me sadly ignorant of all that other girls know!"

"What a world of beauty you will have to inherit later on!" said Val, musingly. "All that is stale to others will be fresh to you. Do you mean to say that you have read no poetry, Ruth?"

"Only Milton and Dr. Watts."

"Do you play?"

"Yes, I begged Aunt Rachael to let me have this one accomplishment. I am very fond of music!"

"You must play to me to-morrow, and I shall send you some books. Aunt Rachael must not be allowed to keep all the sunshine out of your life in this way. She is good, but frightfully narrow in all her opinions, Ruth."

"Don't say that, or I shall think I have been blaming her unjustly," pleaded the girl. "I—I am very happy as a rule, only I should like to read more, and not to be confined within such a narrow circle of duties and interests. It makes me envy other girls, and that is wrong."

Aunt Rachael's entrance with the little,

faded water-colour portrait of the twin-brothers put a stop to the conversation.

After examining the portrait, which for Val possessed little interest, he took leave of his relatives, and went home to dress for dinner.

He had an invitation to dine with the Smedlar-Brounes, great people in the aesthetic line. Miss Smedlar-Broune found Val Curzon unusually distract and inattentive that night. Her quite too utterly-utter conversation, her vague yearnings towards the beautiful and the infinite, met with no satisfactory response from the good-looking young fellow who was wont to be amused by them.

His thoughts had wandered from the towzled-headed, angular, brick-dust complexioned girl beside him, dressed in a kind of limp, old-fashioned bed-gown, to a pale, lovely face framed in golden hair—a face with a kind of angelic peace and purity resting upon it.

Miss Smedlar-Broune's want of beauty, her shallow, meretricious art-talk, only served to increase the admiration, the sense of having found a treasure, that Ruth had awakened within Val Curzon's breast.

He rose early on the following morning, much to the astonishment of his landlady, and went to work with a will to make his sitting-room a model of order and good taste ere Aunt Rachael saw it again.

He knew, artful fellow, that unless he succeeded in winning her good opinion he should see but little of Ruth; and he wanted to study Ruth, to draw her out, feeling quite sure that the result would more than repay him for his trouble.

Archer and Fordham were taken down and stowed away in the recesses of a dark cupboard. The sideboard was cleared of all save an innocent-looking Etruscan water-jar and a couple of glasses.

Val made a clean sweep of the novels and sporting papers, cramming them into a large convenient ottoman. Jim, Meggs, and the puppies were relegated to the back-yard, where they howled musically. Even the photos on the mantelpieces were carefully weeded, Val going about his task with a queer little smile that betokened much inward amusement.

He ordered cakes and fruit, tea, coffee, and cream; he bought a wealth of fresh flowers, and arranged them about the room in rich masses of scented bloom. Then he sat down and whistled softly as he surveyed his handiwork.

"Upon my word it is a change for the better!" he remarked aloud. "I wonder if she will be pleased with it?"

And the personal pronoun had no reference to Aunt Rachael.

Val's guests were somewhat late in arriving. He was on the verge of imitating Mrs. Gamp under similar circumstances by exclaiming impatiently, "Drat it, why don't they come?" when Algy Cavendish put in an appearance.

"Quite Arcadian," he remarked, glancing round the room with languid approval before sinking into an easy chair. "You might be a curate, Curzon, expecting a visit from your bishop. You've done the thing thoroughly for a Philistine. And the Quaker relation? Did you see them yesterday? Are they actually coming?"

"Yes. You'll be discreet, Algy? It's like treading on egg-shells to talk with Aunt Rachael. I'm sometimes at a loss for a subject that won't bring down reproof on my head. Don't, for pity's sake, air your High Church proclivities in her hearing."

"You may trust me, mon cher. In these delicate matters I seldom blunder. I intend to cut you out in your aunt's estimation. I am here for that purpose. You have not alluded to the cousin!"

"I think she will satisfy even your fastidious taste. She is not over forty, or absolutely ugly. Look here, Algy," sitting bolt upright, "you are not to fall in love with Ruth!"

"You wish to reserve that privilege. Very well, I won't enter the lists against you at present. Disinterested friendship is not altogether a thing of the past!"

"Rubbish! If Amelia FitzMarkham were not engrossing your attention I would put not the least faith in your promise."

"And this is gratitude?" murmured Algy, with a sigh, his full, heavy eyelids giving him the appearance of being always half asleep.

Sometimes in society people underrated the mental abilities of the little, sleepy-looking, fair-haired man, and ventured upon some quietly insolent, or unduly familiar, remark.

On these occasions Algy would appear to doze—the reply was so long in coming. But when it did come his interlocutor was, as a rule, sorry he spoke.

The scabbard might be unpromising, but the blade it contained was bright as polished steel.

Algy Cavendish was a representative man, belonging to a purely modern and fast-increasing type. Fond of society, genial, faultlessly-dressed, to be met everywhere, an authority upon all social questions—from the cut of a dress-coat to the exact colour of a professional beauty's eyebrows.

He was also a decent hard-working High Churchman, useful in his lay capacity as altar-server and sidesman at a large popular west-end church.

Algy did not attempt to shelve his creed. With him it was an important and prominent feature, of which he was in no wise ashamed.

How he managed to combine devotion with fashion, without either seeming inconsistent, Val Curzon could not see, yet so it was. Both seemed genuine in their way.

"The ladies, Val!" said Algy, as footsteps were heard ascending the stairs. "Now if you have deceived me—"

Both men rose as the servant opened the door, ushering Aunt Rachael and her niece for the second time into the large, sun-lit, flower-scented room.

(To be continued.)

If thy friends be of better quality than thyself, thou mayest be sure of two things: the first, that they will be more careful to keep thy counsel, because they have much more to lose than thou hast; the second, they will esteem thee for thyself, and not for that thou dost possess.

To divide a small portion of leisure time among many objects, however worthy they may be, is to greatly impair its usefulness. We may, if we please, distribute our money in this way, and trust to the wisdom of those who control such expenditures to make it effective; but time cannot thus be handed over. If it is to do any real good, it must be intelligently concentrated upon something of which we have at least a little knowledge, and in which we are able to act with a fair degree of wisdom.

DESSERT.—At first it is not quite easy to see why the bread, cheese and dessert should be taken at the end of dinner. If we turn our attention, however, to the circulation and the nervous system, and remember the effect produced upon them by the mastication and deglutition of savoury food, we can at once see a good reason for the common manner of terminating a dinner. In order to supply abundant gastric juice for the digestion of the food introduced into it, the stomach requires an abundant supply of blood, and the nervous system must be kept active in order to respond to the calls made upon it. The savoury cheese swallowed in small morsels, and the sweet fruits, which strongly stimulate the nerves of taste, or nuts, which require considerable mastication, cause an abundant flow of blood to the nerve-centres; while the frequent movements of swallowing stimulate the heart and increase the rapidity of the general circulation.

MARRIED AND MARRED.

—o—

BEN, as a lover, was tender and true,
Oh, the most thoughtful of men!
Ever inclined
To be gentle and kind;
Careful, considerate Ben!
Ruth was as happy as happy could be,
Having so gracious a lover as he;
Oft she declared to herself there were few
So self-devoted as Ben.

Many a wish that was close to her heart,
Many desires unexpressed,
Ben would soon discern
In the way lovers learn
Secrets by sweethearts possessed.
Planning to give her a happy surprise,
Longing to see the bright flash in her eyes,
Gracefully, graciously, playing his part,
Daily his love he confessed.

Ben, as a husband, was not a success.
He, the exemplary youth,
Married and marred?
Oh, it was hard!
Quite metamorphosed, in truth.
All his fine chivalry laid on the shelf;
All his thoughts daily devoted to self;
Language the strongest would fail to express
What all this meant unto Ruth.

Missing Love's sunshine, and chilled by the frost,
She keeps remembering when
Attentive and kind,
Less careless and blind,
Was he—her king among men.
Ah, she had never imagined that he
Could so unkind and indifferent be;
Oft she exclaims: "What a lover I lost
When I was married to Ben!"

J. P.

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER.

—to—

CHAPTER XXVII.

The distance from the polo ground to Mrs. Gibson's was little more than a mile, and the fly man, to whom Mrs. Clare promised double fare, very speedily drew up at their destination.

A girl of fourteen was standing in the doorway, with a plump baby in her arms, when they got out and turned to walk up the little footpath side by side.

"Do you see that child in the girl's arms?" said Mrs. Clare suddenly, lifting her veil, and turning a hard, long look on her companion.

"Of course I see it. I am not stone blind!"

"You have no idea whose it is?"

"Not the smallest. Neither know, nor care."

"What would you say if I were to tell you that it was Mary Darvell's?"

"I would say that I did not believe it."

"Very well! Come in with me."

"Excuse me. I would rather not! This peering and prying behind people's backs is not to my taste."

"No? Then you are literally afraid to be thus brought face to face with the truth?" retorted Mrs. Clare, with a taunt in her voice.

"Oh! if you put it that way, I'm afraid of nothing. Where is the woman of the house? What have you got to say to her?"

"Oh, Mrs. Gibson, may we come in for a few minutes?" said Mrs. Clare, with her very sweetest manner; "and could we have a little talk with you alone—quite by ourselves?"

"Certainly, ma'am," looking rather dubiously at Mrs. Clare's companion. "Will you please to walk into the parlour, and take seats?" hurrying before them, and driving her daughter and her daughter's charge out of the way, and then ushering her visitors into a

very low, clean room, containing a square table covered with prize books, a chest of drawers, a horsehair sofa, several wooden chairs, and some gaudy prints.

"Now," closing the door after her, and looking at Mrs. Clare, "I am at your service, ma'am!"

"Well, Mrs. Gibson, I've come to ask you to tell this gentleman all you know about Miss Darvell?"

"Indeed, then, ma'am, you will please to excuse me. Mrs. Darvell's affairs ain't none of my business," said Mrs. Gibson, very stiffly.

"But I think they are your business—for one of her most important affairs is in your hands—the baby."

"Don't say such things before me, Mrs. Clare," said Max, rising and looking very angry. "I won't stand it!"

"Oh, of course, if you like to keep your eyes shut keep them shut, but you will regret your folly yet. This is the good woman that takes care of Mary's child!"

"If you please, ma'am, I'd rather not be brought into it at all. I'm sorry I ever set eyes on the infant, and more sorry than I can say that I let you come here and get it all out of me for a sovereign. And here you are bringing the whole world to hear the story! We have all our faults. I'm not defending the young lady; but a lady she is, as generous and kind-hearted and feeling as ever drew breath. I'll say naught more. I'm sorry I ever said so much."

"Yes, you will to me if you please, Mrs. Gibson," said Max, very sternly. "Do you believe that that is her child that you are taking care of?"

"Why should I tell you, sir?"

"For the excellent reason that I am her husband."

"Oh! And she's privately married! I see it all. Well, then, sir, I can answer you with all my heart. It is hers, to be sure!"

"And what grounds have you for saying so?"

"Just these, that about six months ago she drove up here one morning in a terrible taking, with a baby in her lap—alone—and asked me to keep it, and say nothing about it; and offered to pay whatever I pleased. Very liberal she was indeed, and I never saw a young lady more upset!—one moment red as that rose—another as white as paper. She said he was the child of a friend of hers from near Caversham, that she was privately married, and wanted it kept secretly at nurse for a year."

"And have you ever heard of the mother?"

"No sir—never!"

"Nor her name?"

"No sir!"

"Who looks after the child?"

"Miss Darvell comes on the sly now and then."

"And who pays for its keep?"

"Miss Darvell—regularly as clockwork!"

"Can you prove this?" he commanded, fiercely.

"Yes; I can show you one of the cheques. It came two days ago, and I've not had time (this being washing week) to go into Folkestone and cash it! See! this is it!" unlocking a work-box as she spoke, "and here's the letter that came with it!"

"Mrs. Gibson,—I enclose cheque for five pounds for Johnny's expenses. I hope he is quite well. I shall send him a hat and summer coat whenever I return home!"

"MARY V. DARVELL."

Captain Eliot folded up this terrible piece of evidence with a hand that shook visibly.

"I suppose you are satisfied now?" said Mrs. Clare. "This," with ill-concealed exultation, "was my secret!"

"How did you discover it?"

"I suspected her, and I came here. Mrs. Gibson will tell you the rest!"

"Yes; she came here, sir, and told me it was her duty to hear all, and cried and went on; and said she only wanted to shield her,

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and be her friend. I misdoubt, if she had been her friend, she would not have brought you here, for I misdoubt if the news is what you expected, or, as I thought at first, would be welcome! From your face it's ill-tidings! Ab, it's my unlucky tongue that has just gone, and just ruined one that was good to me!"

"I should have known it some day! Murder will out!" cried the young man, hoarsely, now standing up, and pacing the small room as if he scarcely knew where he was, or what he was doing.

Then suddenly snatching up his hat he said,—

"I shall walk back, Mrs. Clare. You take the fly."

"And go back alone!" she repeated, in a tone of irritated amazement. "I had so much to say to you to talk over. Of course!" lowering her voice, "you will sue for a divorce!"

"I have nothing to discuss with you, Mrs. Clare! You have done your duty, and torn the mask from your ward's face, and shewed me the hideous naked truth—that is insufficient! I must be myself! I must have time to realize it, and to grasp it before I can settle anything!" and, without another word, he opened the door of the little parlour, and went out headlong, like a drunken man.

Mrs. Seymour was amused at her cousin Max. He strode up to her, his boots white with dust, his face livid; and, in a few short disconnected sentences, told her that if he was to drive her home she must start now!

"What! and with the polo only half over, and a dance coming off afterwards! Max, you are mad!"

"Nearly so!"

"What has happened?"

"Come with me, now, and you shall hear! I'm going home by train if you can come, and I leave for London to-night. Stafford can drive the chestnuts, though, so don't come if you don't like!"

"Not come!" her curiosity roused to frenzy. "Of course I'll come. I see something very odd has happened to you. What can it be? Have you lost money, Max?"

"No, worse! Come, if you are coming; we will slip away quietly, and on the way home you shall hear something that will astonish you very much."

"I'm not easily astonished!" said the lady, taking up her parasol and gliding out of the tent. "I have come to believe nothing that I hear, and only the half of what I see!"

"But seeing is believing, is it not?" said her cousin, as he handed her into the T-carr, and took up the rains and set off.

"Oh, yes; seeing is generally tolerably safe."

"Then I shall tell you what I have just seen," he added, as they rattled down the road at spanking trot.

And he whispered in her ear (not wishing to take the groom, who sat behind with folded arms, impetrable countenance, and quiet hearing, into his counsels). A little shriek burst from Mrs. Seymour's lips, at the conclusion of this confidence.

And again he whispered something equally astonishing, for she turned round with parted lips, and her eyes looking full into his and said,—

"Max, I cannot believe you! You have taken leave of your senses, or you have taken too much champagne! One thing is as outrageous as the other. It is a hoax!"

But before they had gone two miles she was very fully convinced that it was no hoax, and she was very white and unusually agitated as she alighted at her own hall-door.

The abrupt departure of Mrs. Seymour and her cousin was not noted at first, and when people began to ask for them and look for them they could learn nothing beyond the fact that they had been driving along at a great pace, about half-an-hour previously.

No one could form any idea of their reason for going away thus abruptly—no one, save Mrs. Clare, who had returned in her fly, and

joined the party so unostentatiously that no one guessed that she had ever left it.

Her eyes followed Miss Darvall, who was walking up and down the sward with a lubberly man, the observed of all observers—thanks to her pretty face, her pretty figure, her pretty dress, and her fortune. All the time—although she kept up a vivacious conversation with her companion—she kept saying to herself,—

"What can have become of Max? What is detaining him?"

Mrs. Clare's eyes sparkled as she thought of the awful mine that was about to explode under a certain young lady's feet!

All things, bad and good, come to an end. The polo, a cold collation, and a *The Danzante*, wound up by seven o'clock; and nine beheld all the party seated round the dinner-table at Rose Court—all but Eliot. Where was he?

His absence was not accounted for by Mrs. Seymour in any way, and she was silent, absent, and quite unlike herself. There was thunder in the air, some scandal was on the tapi—some scene, everyone felt it—and every one was unusually subdued; with the exception of Tommy, who lifted up his squeaking voice rather suddenly and said,—

"Max Eliot is going away! His man is packing his things!"

"Is this really true?" said Miss Hall, looking at her hostess.

"Yes, quite true, I am sorry to say."

"Rather a sudden start!" said Captain Durand, looking fixedly at Mary, who looked back at him with pale amazement. "Has he had bad news?"

"Yes, very bad news," replied Mrs. Seymour, in a tone that implied that she did not intend to give any further details.

Dinner was dull; even the discussion of a very pleasant day fell flat, jokes missed fire, and smiles were scarce.

When the ladies withdrew, Mary waylaid her hostess and took her arm, as they walked to the drawing-room, and said,—

"Tell me why he is going?" she asked eagerly. "What has happened? What is it all about?"

"Come in here," opening the door of the library. "Come in here," added Mrs. Seymour, in a curiously cool tone, "and I'll tell you. You want to hear what it is all about?" closing the door behind her, and confronting Mary with an angry, scornful face. "Wretched girl! Don't you know! Can't you guess? It's all about you!"

"About me! What about me?"

"He has found you out!"

"You are talking ridiculous! Please speak plainly, and say what you mean at once, and don't torture me!"

"He," drawing her breath, and speaking with slow emphasis, "has been to Mrs. Gibson's cottage, and seen your *protégé*!"

"Yes!" colouring. "Who took him there?"

"Mrs. Clare!"

"Mrs. Clare! How did she know!"

"Mary—Miss Darvall—I am absolutely staggered at your unblushing effrontery. Are you not ashamed of yourself? Are you so hardened that you can coolly discuss who found you out!"

"Mrs. Seymour," approaching, and steady-ing herself by leaning against the table, "it is not possible that you and he believe that I have anything to be hardened about or ashamed of. It is not possible that you believe that," colouring scarlet, "that child is anything to me beyond—"

"Beyond being your own!" interrupted the other fiercely. "Oh no! Not possible!—not possible that it is a friend—your dearest friend's—your dear self! Not possible that you, and no one else, visits it by stealth, and pays for its maintenance!"

"That is enough!" cried Mary, darting off to a writing-table, and taking up a pen and dashing off a few lines in feverish haste.

The note, all shaky and blotted, ran as follows:—

"DEAR JULIA.—My husband has found out your baby! You must clear me at once. Answer by return or telegram.—MARY."

To thrust this into an envelope, scrawl the address, stamp it, was the work of a minute.

"Can this go now?" she said, holding it out to Mrs. Seymour. "Send a man on horseback; it will catch the night-mail, and I shall have an answer by this time to-morrow."

"Yes, it can go now," ringing the bell.

"I'm sorry you mistrust me, Mrs. Seymour—you who have been such a kind, true friend to me! I have not abused your confidence!"

"Yes you have, Mary Eliot! Why did you not tell me that you were my cousin's wife?"

"If you knew all you would not be surprised that I should hesitate to take your cousin's name. You should have been at our wedding, and then you would understand everything."

"I understand that you were a couple of young fools!"

"Very likely we were!"

"After this disgrace it is just as well you never did take his name; and, of course, he will never suffer you to have it now! You can scarcely expect that?"

"Will he not? Where is he?"

"In my sitting-room. He starts by the mail in a few minutes. Poor fellow! He is fearfully cut up! You have ruined his life, for he was fond of you, you miserable wicked girl. You deserve hanging!"

"Miserable enough, but not wicked. I must see him at once."

"That you cannot, and shall not do. He will never set eyes on you again. He said so. His solicitors will write. They will make all arrangements."

"Do not stand between me and the door. I will pass," said Mary, resolutely.

In another moment she was flying up the soft carpeted stairs, along a passage, and into a room—a sitting room lit by one lamp, where a man sat at the table resting his head on his arm in an attitude that spoke for itself.

The first thing she did was to shut and lock the door, the next to hold up the key and say,—

"You don't leave this room till you say that you believe me!"

He raised his head and looked at her, his face flushed with intense anger—nay, fury.

"Believe you! Yes, to be the worst, the most deceitful of your sex, a whitened sepulchre."

Every word came slowly, the concentrated repression of each indicating a suppression of rage which almost placed her life in danger.

"Do you know," he said, in a hot, thick voice, "that I have a good mind to murder you and then kill myself? Why not? You have murdered every good feeling in my heart—belief in the pure and beautiful, belief in everything but wickedness. Do you know that you have, as it were, given your life into my hands when you came in here and locked that door behind you?"

She drew herself up and looked him steadily in the face, and tried with all her might not to betray the absolute physical fear which was making every limb quiver.

"Do you see this?" reaching for and taking up a long foreign dagger that lay upon a writing-table. "Do you see this?" he repeated, removing its sheath and holding the glittering weapon in the light. "Yes," examining it closely, "it is sharp, it will make no bungling. The good old laws were best! No mercy was shown to a woman who betrayed her husband, her punishment was death."

"She was strangled, but—" coming a little closer.

In a moment the words seem to choke her. Then she lifted her hands half in supplication, half as if warding him off.

"Max, if you kill me you will be sorry," sudden tears filling her eyes. "I am innocent. Before Heaven I am innocent; and oh! the

shame of it!" the blushes covering her face to the roots of her hair. "Of what you think—"

He looked at her scornfully for nearly sixty seconds, and then coming up close to her laid his hand upon her arm, holding it fast with a strong vice-like grasp that made her courage ebb away, and left her only a shrinking, terrified trembling girl.

"Woman," he said fiercely, "would you die with a lie upon your lips? Would you ask me to disbelieve my own senses?"

"I would ask you to believe me, Max!" she answered, bursting into a storm of tears.

These tears were her safety. They swept the momentary madness from her accuser's brain. He relinquished her arm and recoiled a step, and said,—

"I am brute! No matter how abandoned you may be, yet you are a woman!"

"I—I—am," with a stifled sob, "I am your wife, Max. And—and I demand a hearing!" A sudden desperate strength came to her, and she stood and looked at him with gleaming and defiant eyes. "I have done you no wrong," she said, slowly but distinctly. "No—no wrong!"

"Oh, no! none at all!" he interrupted, with a savage laugh.

"I have been foolish," she continued. "I have made great trouble for myself by shielding another. She came to me last Christmas, told me she had been privately married, and wanted to conceal her baby. She wanted to leave it with me, but I vowed I would not have it! Next morning I called for her at the 'Fortunes Armes,' to take her out to make arrangements with Mrs. Gibson. But she had gone, and left the baby for me! I could not allow it to starve—now could I?"

"And this is six months ago? Who is she?"

"I am bound to secrecy. She will release me. I've written now. You shall hear immediately."

"When does she mean to claim it?"

"She never says. She seems reluctant to leave a most luxurious home for a hard, rough life of poverty in the colonies. That is her alternative!"

"A very clever tale, I must say!"

"You believe me, do you not? Oh, say you believe me! Trust me, even till to-morrow, Max!"

"Believe you! No! I am a sane man!"

She looked at him for a full minute with a gaze that surprised him. A faint quiver of her white lips degenerated to a scornful curve.

"You are neither just nor generous!" she said. "You surprise another's secret for mine, try me, and condemn me, and refuse to listen to my defence—refuse to allow me to call witnesses in behalf of my innocence! Wait till to-morrow for some honest testimony in my favour!"

"I must wait now!" glancing at the clock on the mantelpiece. "Yes, I will be just. I shall not condemn you unheard. But, oh!" sitting down, and once more burying his head in his arms, "Mary, the evidence is too strong. I dare not build on your innocence! You don't know; you could not realise, or believe, how I loved you! I thought you the purest, if the proudest, of your sex! And, to think—surely with me the bitterness of death is past!"

"And surely with me the bitterness of death is past!" she echoed, snatching up the dagger, and walking over and throwing it out of the open window.

The blinds were not down, and some curiosity had been evinced by spectators, who were strolling up and down the terrace, as to what those two figures were doing in that lighted room upon the second story—who they were.

They could not see; but, now and then, a tone—the tone of a man's voice—speaking with intense passion, or emotion of some kind, fell upon a passing ear. Then—oh, mystery! Miss Darvall, in her white gown, came suddenly and swiftly to the window, and flung some glittering, shining metal object forth—

something that fell on the marble terrace with a loud clang.

Lucy Berry ran and picked it up, promptly; and, to her amazement, it proved to be a dagger!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MRS. CLARE did not see the end of the "cataclysm" she had caused, greatly to her disgust. Instead of her young charge coming to her tears, grief, and penitence, and throwing herself into her arms and making her her confidante, she met with a very great surprise, a staggering blow!

At eleven o'clock that night, as she was preparing for bed, had removed certain coils of her hair and stowed them carefully away, had washed off her complexion and altered her appearance very considerably, a single, loud knock caused her to start and then to say, "Come in," and, to her astonishment, in swept Miss Darvall looking very white and resolute. "Oh, oh! so she is taking it like this," thought the matron to herself, as she said,—

"I wish to have a few words with you, Mrs. Clare; they are more satisfactory than writing."

What on earth did the girl mean?

Mrs. Clare felt irritated to feel herself quite small and horribly subdued, in flannel dressing-gown and scanty looks, before this pale, imperious-looking young beauty in flowing white silk and a wealth of youth and diamonds.

"My husband" (how odd it sounded) "has, thanks to you, found out a secret of mine and a friend's, more especially the friend's, as she is the mother of that little boy at Mrs. Gibson's. At present things look very black for me."

"They do, indeed!" said Mrs. Clare, complacently.

"I hope by to-morrow or next day to be in a position to disprove every unworthy suspicion. Meanwhile, Mrs. Clare, I have no further occasion for your services," she concluded, briefly.

"Meaning that you are so certain of reinstating yourself with Captain Eliot that I shall be *de trop*," said Mrs. Clare, with a bitter smile.

"You are quite mistaken! If Captain Eliot never speaks to me again, if he divorces me, I part with you. I engaged you as my chaperon and companion, not as a domestic detective and spy!"

Mrs. Clare blanched—nay, she became yellow.

"I only did my duty, my dear," she exclaimed.

"Pardon me, your ideas of duty and mine are quite opposed. You knew I had some secret in my mind, and set to work to find it out, but you failed. My real secret, that I especially wished to conceal, was my marriage. In searching you stumbled upon another person's secret, one which places me in a very equivocal position with my husband. You, of all people, betrayed it to him, for what reason you, perhaps, know best. I," gazing at her, "can but guess! If you had done your duty, as I read the word, you would have come to me the instant you discovered what you doubtless considered my guilt and told me of the fact, condemned me, admonished to make amends and confession to Maxwell himself. If you had done this I would have told you all—all—even about my marriage, but you went to work in a sly, underhand way. You kept your discovery at a stone's throw in your aling, and when you saw your way to striking with effect you flung it—flung it yesterday. It has done its work. It," placing both her hands to her heart, "it has hurt me horribly, but it has done something else as well—it has flung you out of a good situation and a luxurios home. I doubt if you will ever be so comfortably placed again. You need not, in taking similar place, apply to me, for I shall say that you are a selfish, indolent, deceitful, malignant woman!"

Here Mrs. Clare burst forth with volcanic passion.

"You are a young woman with an awful tongue, and a disreputable character!" cried Mrs. Clare, rising in her wrath. "At any rate, you must pay me, or give a quarter's notice. I would not stay here under your roof for treble the money!"

"Sour grapes! Here is a cheque I've drawn out for fifty pounds. Take it, and never let me see you again! Your boxes and all belongings will be sent from Folkestone to any address you mention; you will please to leave this to-morrow. I am leaving also, so no fracas will be suspected; and I most humbly trust that I shall never see you, or anyone in the least like you, again!"

So saying, with a slight and haughty inclination of her head, Mary Darvall walked to the door, opened it, and disappeared, carrying with her, so to speak, her enemy's guns and colours, and all the honours of a great victory!

Worn out by an evening of the most exhausting emotions, she scarcely placed her head on her pillow ere she was sound asleep. She was completely worn out in body and mind by her recent experiences.

Next morning she did not appear. The longed-for afternoon post brought her a letter in Julia's well-known hand, which she tore open and devoured. It said:—

"DEAREST MARIE,—Yours just received. I answer it at once. Try and put off Captain Eliot in some way. I dare not acknowledge the child now. Father is more odd than ever, and talks perpetually with my marriage with some swell. Hector writes most miserable accounts of the bad times out there. I dare not face such poverty after this life here; it would just kill me. Meanwhile, my dearest, truest, and best of friends, keep my secret, as you have hitherto done; don't betray me! What would become of baby and me only for your generosity? You are my only hope; I throw myself on you, knowing you will not fail me. Keep Captain Eliot in the dark; tell him it is a maid's child. Tell him anything but the truth about me; and meanwhile, till things change for the better, wait! This is the prayer of your devoted and grateful friend and cousin, JULIA CAMPBELL (to you—DARVALL to everyone else)."

Mary perused this letter twice over with feelings of the keenest disappointment. She who had done so much for Julia, and Julia would do nothing for her!

Her heart burnt like fire within her. No longer would she be Julia's tool and scapegoat. Julia must find for herself for the future.

She would wash her hands of one who, being appealed to in a desperate extremity—in a case where her friend's name, honour, and life's happiness was in the balance—writes *wait!*

"I've had a letter," said Mary, rising, as her husband entered the library. "Here, you may read it," holding it out. "I am terribly disappointed! I have sacrificed much for Julia, my cousin—taken up and provided for the child, which she abandoned, entirely out of my own pocket. I have paid her debts. I've made her father a liberal allowance, and left him undisturbed possession of Danesford. I told her, when she ran away and left me her child, that I was risking my own good name and my future happiness; but she does not care what happens to me, as you will see by her letter," tendering it as she spoke.

"Heartless, selfish, wretch," he exclaimed, as he came to the end of the epistle. "And so the child is *hers*!"

"Yes. She is privately married to a stockman in Australia—an old lover. He is a common man, but worthy and excellent; too good for Julia, who is quite ready to desert him as well as his child. His name is Hector Campbell."

"And you have been Mrs. Campbell's screen



["I WISH TO HAVE A FEW WORDS WITH YOU, MRS. CLARE. THEY ARE MORE SATISFACTORY THAN WRITING!"]

and cat's-paw all along?" looking at her in amazement.

"Yes."

"Mary! I humbly implore your pardon for a great wrong that I did you yesterday. Will you forgive me? Will you allow me take your affairs in hand at once?"

"Yes; but I should like Julia to confess to you herself. How do you know this letter is genuine?"

"Anyone could see that it has a weak, selfish, heartless woman scrawled all over it. You could not compose that letter to save your life."

"Yes! little you thought of my life last evening."

"I am ashamed to recall it. I was mad with grief and pain and rage. Do you know what I am going to do now? Write to Mrs. Gibson."

"Oh! Why?"

"You shall see," taking up a sheet of paper and writing away rapidly,

"Mrs. Gibson.—The child in your charge is the son of Mrs. Hector Campbell. Daneford Place, near Caversham. You will have to apply to her for funds and instructions for the future, as I do not wish my wife to take any future interest in Mrs. Campbell's concerns. Mrs. Campbell is known, and you had better address her, as Miss Julia Darvall."

"MAXWELL ELIOT.

"August 2nd."

"Now, if you will address this it shall go this post," passing it towards her as he spoke. "My next move will be to go down to Carnforth and have a serious talk with this Julia Darvall."

"A talk. Oh! you don't know Julia. It will do no good!"

"Yes; it is time that her eyes are opened to the fact that she can no longer shove her burdens on other people's shoulders," he returned emphatically, as he stamped the letter.

"Then let me manage it. I will write. I will even go down to Daneford. It will be far better."

"Certainly not. She will only make a scene, and cry and hug you, and make you her cat's-paw as usual. Miss Julia required to be dwelt with firmly. You have a weakness for her, and she trades upon that fact."

"She does, indeed," returned Mary, glancing ruefully at the letter.

"I shall go down to Carnforth this evening, and shall open the trenches from there with caution. You, I suppose, would not come with me?"

"No," shaking her head; "I shall stay here till the whole affair is sifted and cleared up, till Julia comes forward and acknowledges her child, and all suspicion is blown to the winds. You had better tell Mrs. Seymour that to you I am cleared. We had rather a scene last night, and I would not be surprised if she turned me out-of-doors. By the way, talking of turning people out-of-doors, I have sent Mrs. Clare about her business."

"Really! You must have required a good deal of nerve to do that. She was not an easy person to tackle," rejoined her husband, admiringly.

"Are you sorry that she has gone?"

"I! Good gracious, no! What was the woman to me?"

"A very agreeable companion, to say the least of it."

"Now, now, Mary! You are never going to begin by being jealous of Mrs. Clare. Why, she was nearly old enough to be my mother."

"That goes for nothing. Some men—as for instance, George IV.—preferred women when they were fair, fat and forty, and you certainly paid no end of attention to Mrs. Clare, and found evident pleasure in her society. Every one could see that, that was not blind."

"And do you know the reason why I talked to her?"

"The reason, as I have already said, was patent to every eye."

"No, I think not. It was because she was your companion; because I presume she knew you intimately; because I could talk to her about you."

"Why did you not go to the fountain-head and talk to me?"

"Because I am proud. I never give anyone a chance of snubbing me twice, and you were always surrounded by a crowd of other fellows."

"And what did Mrs. Clare tell you about me? Nothing very good I am sure?"

"She thoroughly understands the art of faint praise—I will say that for her—and has reduced the art of insinuating disagreeable things to a perfect science. She never said anything bad outright. She was far too cautious, but she never gave you a good word. I soon saw through her immediately; besides, I had heard of her before. She little knew that I was aware, by hearsay of accredited witnesses, that she had broken her darling Tom's heart by her flirtations, and then worried him to his grave between her tongue and her debts. At first I thought she had been maligned, but I very soon discovered her capabilities of heart and speech. Now I am going to speak to Sophy. I have no time to lose if I am to go down to Caversham to-day. You will give me your company over to Canterbury, won't you? By Jove!" looking at his watch, "it is time to make a start. Five minutes I give you to dress, and five I give to Sophy to make all square between you!"

Exit Captain Maxwell Eliot.

(To be continued.)

A NATIVE white mushroom of Natal attains a diameter of from eighteen inches to two feet. It makes a delicious dish when fried, and is greatly relished by the natives, who refuse the common edible mushroom of the same localities.



[LYNNE, LYNNE, MY LOVE! OH, LOOK UP, IF 'TIS ONLY FOR ONE MOMENT.]

NOVELETTE.]

A WOMAN'S PRIDE.

—:-

CHAPTER I.

AFTER LONG YEARS.

"If you to me prove false, love,
And I am cold to you;
The world will still go on, I think,
Just as it used to do.
The moon will flirt with the clouds,
And the sun will kiss the sea;
And the birds in the trees will whisper,
And laugh at you and me.
So I think you had better be kind, love,
And I had better be true;
And let the old love continue,
Just as it used to do."

The words and the quaint melody ring with a clear distinctness upon my ears as I stand near the open window gazing out upon the sweet moonlit earth. A sad, bitter calm is on me to-night, for without warning, without one moment wherein to gather all my woman's pride to my aid, Lynne Dysart and I have met again.

All the old passionate longing that I had deemed dead has sprung back to life at sight of him, and I know that if we part as strangers once more, that my life will henceforth be a living death.

He is sitting at the piano which stands at the far end of the large room; but from my position at the lace-draped window I can see his profile, can see the long dark lashes drooping over the olive cheeks, and I wonder what expression the brown eyes are wearing; why he has chosen that song? Is he singing it for me? Ah, surely no! We met and parted years back now. He would not sing that song to me now.

It all comes back to me so plainly, as I stand

here alone in this crowded room. It was in the summer time that we met, in the sweet summer that he asked me to be his wife, while we were walking in the woods where the sun fell upon the long-tangled grass in quaint golden patches, and the birds sang softly in the bushes around us and in the trees above our heads.

We had paused under a large elm to watch a hare as it sat washing its face, all unconscious of the nearness of its arch enemy, when he put out his hands and drew me to him, whispering tenderly,—

"And whenam I to catch my little hare, darling? You are so shy and reserved I have sometimes feared you do not care, and at others I am filled with hope."

Not in words did I answer, but I put my hands about his neck and laid my head on his breast. It was so much easier than speaking, and it told him what he wished to know. And so we were betrothed.

Summer passed and winter came, and in the spring he won my promise that when the month of roses came I would be his bride. It was only three weeks before the day fixed for the wedding, and it seemed to me that earth was so fair—how could another be fairer—and then one day came the crushing knowledge that he did not love me as I had dreamed.

I was going out into the garden, and as I passed the library I thought I would take a book with me; so I went in and selected one from my favourite author, and was turning away when an open sheet of paper on the table caught my gaze.

Perhaps it was not right, not strictly honourable, to pause and read what was written there, but Lynne's handwriting and my own name made me forget, and this is what I read:—

"DEAR FATHER—What you ask is utterly impossible. Had your request been made sooner, had I known your wishes, it might have been. As it is, I am in honour bound to marry Madeline Westebrooke."

That is all, but it altered my whole life—changed me from a careless, merry girl into a proud, cold woman. In honour bound! No! he should have his freedom, I told myself, as I stole away down the lime-shadowed pathway of our dear old garden to my own seat.

I had not been there long when I heard footsteps and looking up I saw Lynne coming towards me, his dark eyes gleaming, and a smile on his proudly-curved lips.

"Madoline," he said, "I have been looking for you, you naughty child. I am going home to-morrow. You need not run away from me like that!"

There was a ring of reproach, mingled with the love, in his voice, but I heeded not. I put his hands away and rose, standing before him with a cold, hard look on my face.

"Lynne," I said, so quietly that it astonished myself, "I think we have both made a great mistake; but it is not too late, I am thankful to say. Will you give me back my freedom?"

I did not mention that letter. My pride would not allow that. He must think that I had changed; he should never know how dear he was to me.

We stood for a moment perfectly silent. After I spoke those words I looked him coldly and steadily in the face, while my heart was breaking. Then he stooped and caught my hands in his, crying passionately,—

"Madoline, are you the heartless flirt your words proclaim, or is there another reason for these strange words?"

And I raised my head proudly and said, with a touch of scorn in my voice,—

"How is it that we can be so cruel to those we love? We women are privileged to change our minds, you know, Mr. Dysart," and then I laughed while I stooped to pluck a spray of fragrant honeysuckle that had strayed down from its thick hedge, and touched the hem of my muslin dress.

The proud, haughty look I had seen for others, but never for myself; in those dark eyes came there, and he lifted his hat as he turned away, saying—

"Miss Westbrooke shall, of course, not be deprived of the privileges of her sex. Will she be so kind as to make my adieu, as I wish to catch the down train which starts in a quarter of an hour?"

I bowed, and watched the tall litho figure striding away down the long, straight, white country road. I watched until the high hedges of the meadows and the bend at the cross-roads hid him from my view, and then I fled up to my own room, where I wept the bitterest tears of my life.

I heard the shrill whistle of the train as it passed into the tunnel near the station, and I pictured him standing near the pretty geranium bed, waiting; and when the whistle again sounded on the quiet country air, I knew that my sun of love was set.

We have never met since. Our home is far away from his, and when I told mamma that we had parted for ever, I think she read some of my sorrow in my face, for she only said,—

"You will tell me all some day!"

And then we put the wedding clothes away, I, with a proud, cold indifference of manner; she, with pale, sad face, and we never mentioned Lynne Dysart's name again.

That was all five years ago, when I was only twenty. My gentle mother has gone to join the father I never knew, and I am living with my aunt, who is a mover in "fashionable society."

This is one of her "at homes," and the distinguished traveller who has been the talk of the season is here, and his name is Lynne Dysart-Morton.

I had never dreamed when discussing him and his daring that Dysart-Morton could have sought to do with my quondam lover, and I am more than astonished to find that he is still single. He is singing the last verse of that old song, and then there is a murmur of applause which I do not join in.

Instead, I turn away with my back to the company, thinking myself well hid from view by the drooping satin of the curtains; but I am mistaken, for suddenly a voice sounds at my side, and looking round I see Lynne gazing at me with the old passionate look in his dark eyes.

"You are thinking deeply, Miss Westbrooke," he says, softly. "I have spoken twice, and was just going in despair of arousing you from your reverie."

"It is a pity you should trouble, Mr. Dysart-Morton," I say, drawing myself proudly away. "He shall not see how I care. He shall not have the pleasure of fooling me again, I determine."

"Trouble!" he echoes, half-sadly. What an accomplished flirt he is! "If Miss Westbrooke grants me a few words, it is reward enough for great—"

"Excuse me, Mr. ——, what am I to call you?"

"Morton. I had to take my uncle's name at his death."

"Mr. Morton?" I go on, coldly, but with a quiet friendliness, "but if we are ever to agree, or be friends, you will spare me those absurd platitudes!"

"Your will is my law!" and then, having so said, he moves back, just as two or three young fellows, with more height and good looks than brains, and more money than they deserve, saunter up to where I stand.

I am half-pleased and yet annoyed at the interruption. I love Lynne as I never loved him in those early days—love him with a woman's, not a girl's strength; but my pride forbids that he should know, and so it is best that we should not be together alone.

I have often wondered why he engaged himself to me, not caring; but I have come to the conclusion that he did care a little, and that my money—for I am rich—was the great attraction!

Lynne Dysart was poor. Lynne Dysart

Morton is wealthy, and would like a beautiful and accomplished bride. Let him seek one from the many lovely women who surround him.

Never again will I listen to words of love from him, I tell myself, as I stand there, watching his face while he converses with some of the guests, in a laughing, easy manner, that seems to me to be taken by a heart free from the pain of remembered or present sorrows.

Some one asks me to sing, and I go mechanically to the piano, and take the song chosen for me. It is "Bid Me Good-Bye and Go." I wish it had not been that song, but I dash into it without giving myself time for hesitation—

"Man's love is like the restless waves,
Ever at rise and fall;
The only love a woman craves,
It must be all in all.
Ask me no more if I regret,
You need not care to know;
A woman's heart does not forget,
Bid me good-bye and go."

How I sing those lines with unconscious passion, till I feel that the room is whirling round with me. Then a man's voice, speaking words not meant for my ears, reassures me.

"By Jove!" she sings that all if she feels it! I say, wasn't there something between her and Dysart a few years back?"

Without pausing, I strike the opening bars of a merry little song I remembered hearing my mother sing, and I enter into the spirit of it as my voice rises and falls in the sparkling refrain; and when I turn away from the piano, amidst a loud murmur of applause, I feel that they, at least, cannot say I am wearing the willow!

Lynne is standing near me, with his dark eyes fixed on me; but I do not change colour. My pride is up in arms, and I look him calmly in the face, as he says,—

"Is your heart as elastic as your voice, Miss Westbrooke?" and I answer, with a light laugh,—

"Yes; if I have one; but, you know, we do not trouble about our hearts in these days, unless they trouble us, when we walk or ride hard!"

A dark frown passes over his handsome face, and he turns away. Later on I see him in earnest conversation with a girl who is called my rival, because she was the beauty until I appeared, and I wonder, with a hot, dull pain at my heart, if he will fall in love with her!

She is very lovely, with flaxen hair, waxy complexion, and large, dreamy blue eyes; and she is natural.

He seems to admire her, for he stays beside her during the rest of the evening; and when the guests are leaving, he leads her to her carriage, settling her cloak about her plump white shoulders with more than ordinary care.

And then he comes to bid me good-night. I see him searching the room with those keen dark eyes, and then he catches sight of me, and comes forward, his face very grave and calm. I catch sight of my reflection in one of the mirrors as I stand there, under the full glare of the electric light, and I know I am fair to look upon!

Opals flash redly from amidst the bronze masses of my hair; they gleam on my arms and neck, and on my satin shoes. The light falls on the glittering ivory satin train of my robe, and on my face, and I see that I am beautiful! The skin is soft and warmly white, the lips chiselled and perfect in colour, and the blue-grey eyes look black under their long dark lashes!

Lynne's eyes are upon me with a look of something that is akin to passion and love in them; but I tell myself so did he look in the olden days, when he would have married me for honour's sake; and I look coldly on him now, though it would be ah! so sweet to lay my head upon his breast and hear him murmur "I love you!"

"I have come to bid you good-night," he says, in the rich tones that thrill me as none other ever will.

"Good-night, Mr. Morton!" I say, frigidly, holding out my hand, and he bows low over it a moment, and then I am alone with my own thoughts, for the guests have all left while I have been watching the movements of the man I love.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW LOVER. AT THE GARDEN PARTY.

"How do you like our great traveller?" asks my aunt, as we sit at breakfast next morning discussing the events of the previous evening.

"I like him very well, auntie," I return, indolently. "Are we going out anywhere this afternoon?"

My aunt gives me a keen glance from under her thick dark brows, and I feel that she is not, as hoped, utterly unaware of that episode in my past life, in which Lynne Dysart played so large a part.

"We are due at Lady West's!" she says, quietly. "Make yourself look nice!" and then she rises and leaves the apartment.

She knows as well as I do that I only put that question to stop further conversation on the subject of Lynne Dysart-Morton, and I feel that she is a little vexed with me for not telling her more of my thoughts and wishes.

I cannot help that, I say to myself, as I rise and go to the window, which looks out on to a tiny plot of grass with tall standard roses at each side.

My aunt lives in Park-lane, and I can see the Park from my post at the window; but there is nothing new in that, and I turn away with a sigh.

Yesterday morning I was quietly content with my lot; to-day there is a tumult of unrest in my bosom. The fire I thought dead has only been smouldering, and a wind has arisen to fan it into stronger, fiercer life than in the old days.

How can I live my life in calmness? How can I meet him day after day as I must, and meet as a mere acquaintance? Will not my eyes betray me? Ah! I must keep a watch even upon my thoughts when in his presence, lest he read them in my eyes.

My reverie is broken in upon by a sharp ring at the visitors' bell, and after the lapse of a few moments a footman appears, announcing—

"Lieutenant George Graham!"

George Graham is a handsome, well-built, young fellow, standing six feet in his stockings. Fair-haired, blue eyed, and clear-skinned; he looks a man to be proud of either as lover, son, or brother; and as I meet his earnest glance of respectful admiration, I feel half sorry, really more sorry than glad, for something tells me he cares, and I—I have no love to give mortal man; it all lies buried in the grave where I laid the image of my ideal, Lynne Dysart.

"You are an early caller, Mr. Graham?" I say, with a smile, as he takes my hand.

"Is it against etiquette?" he asks, looking down at me, and I turn away with a laugh.

"Oh, no! only auntie is busy writing, as we have to be at Lady West's garden party, and I thought you ——"

"Are you to be there?" he cries, eagerly. "I was looking forward to a miserable day, as I heard you were engaged elsewhere."

"Poor boy!" I answer, "and now it will, of course, be all bright? How very complimentary! I think my head will be turned if another star does not soon rise and eclipse me."

"You can never be eclipsed!" he whispers softly, and I lift my eyes to his face for a moment, not robukingly.

It is wrong, I know. Flirting is a despisable pastime, but I catch sight of Lynne coming up the path, and a longing—to show how little I care for him—comes over me; a

longing to show him that someone will care for me—for myself alone—and so I do what no true, pure hearted woman should do. I lift my eyes shyly and smile, while a blush of shame mantles my cheek, and I suppose George Graham thinks that blush is for him.

My aunt appears at this juncture, and almost simultaneously with her entrance Lynne is announced.

His face is very grave, and his eyes are gravely inquiring when they meet mine, but I will not heed. My voice is clear and cold, though my head and heart are burning.

Men and women are actors and actresses born. George Graham and he are old friends, and have gone out on many a tiger hunting expedition in far-away burning India together.

I think there is a story of a life saved when George Graham might have left Lynne Dysart without disgracing his good name by so doing; but to-day, as they greet each other, I see a look of challenge in their eyes, and I know that it is I who have set these two apart.

And I turn to George Graham and ask some question about the garden-party, leaving my aunt to entertain Lynne.

We stand apart from those two, I laughing merrily at my companion's bright sallies—for George is clever—and now and again Lynne's voice, grave and cold, breaks upon my ear. Presently I hear him say,—

"I will not trespass on your time any longer, Mrs. Carew!"

And George Graham whispers, with a move and comical glance down at me,—

"And I must, of course, follow suit!"

My aunt comes to me where I stand after they have gone, and putting her hands on my shoulders looks quietly into my face.

"Madoline," she says kindly, "they are both good, honest, true-hearted men: do not play with them. I should be sorry to see my sister's child sink so low."

"I am not playing with them. Lynne Dysart never cared—he played with me, and I hate him!" I cry, passionately. "As for George Graham," I add, "if he cares for me, perhaps it will not be in vain."

"Are you serious? Have you thought well over it, child? Marriage is not all play. Can you live your life of joys and sorrows, of broken hopes and disappointments, with George Graham? Are you certain that between his face and yours there would not rise up one with dark, reproachful eyes, and render your future one of utter and bitter torture?"

Her face is very white and grave as she speaks, and I remember that she married her now dead husband while loving another, for her mother's sake. I dare not answer her directly, for I know that I do love Lynne, and that life without him will be a blank.

"Oh, auntie," I say, putting out my hands to her, "I am not as happy as I seem," and then, before she can question me further, I quit the room.

Lady West's house is on the banks of the Thames, and a charming place it is. A smooth velvet lawn of radiant brightness slopes down to the water's edge, where the water laps against the dark-brown earth with a soft low murmur.

Big alders and graceful willows render the immediate banks a cool spot even on the hottest day, and here I have stolen alone to have a quiet "think," and watch the gay human butterflies flitting to and fro on the lawn near the house.

My flaxen-haired rival is here looking very sweet and attractive, in pale shell pink robe and a little bonnet of plush and feathers to match; and so the men seem to find her, for there is quite a little crowd in her vicinity.

But it is not the court of the crowd that makes my heart grow sick within me. It is the look on Lynne's face as he bends over her and offers his arm, and they go across the lawn together, and are lost to my view behind the trees and shrubs.

Presently I hear the crunching of feet on

the gravel pathway to my left, and looking round I see George Graham. I do not know what is my purpose. I do not know if I could say "yes" were he to ask me to be his wife, but I smile brightly and pleasantly at him and go forward a step.

"I have been searching for you everywhere," he says. "Why did you come down here alone?"

"Because I wanted to be quiet and watch from a distance," I return. "The music sounds too loud up there, and there are so many other sounds one cannot trace the tune."

"Shall we stay here, then?" asks George, promptly, and I acquiesce without one thought of the construction that will be put upon such a proceeding.

We laugh and talk on all subjects, and though many times I catch my companion's eyes and feel the love in their glance, he does not speak one word of love. But I know I have compromised myself, and laugh on recklessly. As well marry him and make him happy, as live on my life in loneliness.

Presently I propose that we go to back to where the marquesas are erected on the square flat of the lawn, and as we emerge from the shadow of the trees, and come out on to the open ground, we meet Lynne face to face.

He is alone, and his eyes are hard and cold as they glaze from George Graham to me, but he pauses and speaks; and, oh! it would be better far that he should pass on than converse in that easy, indifferent manner.

"How can he do it?" I cry, inwardly, and then comes the answer,—

"He only cared for your money, then; he is rich now, and need not wed for a fortune."

"Are you going to try your skill with the bow and arrow?" asks Lynne, turning to me. "If so, you had better come to the archery ground now," and just then our hostess comes up with some fresh arrivals, and George Graham is carried away, leaving us two alone.

Lynne does not attempt to move, although he said a moment back that we must go at once. As I stand there with the rich sunlight falling around me, the sounds of music filling the air, and my once lover at my side, all my love walls up in a wild surging agony, and I remember with bitter pain the lines of a song he used to sing.

"What are we waiting for, you and I? A parting kiss and a stifled cry. Good-bye, for ever, good-bye, good-bye."

and unconsciously my breath comes quicker.

My companion hears that sigh and comes a step nearer, his lips part as though about to speak; then he draws back, that proud look I remember so well sweeping over the dark handsome face, and he offers me his arm in silence.

"Have they started?" I ask, feeling that if I do not speak I shall cry aloud.

"Yes," he says. "Miss Westbrooke must pardon me, but I had fallen into dreamland."

"A bad habit, Mr. Morton," I retort, with a laugh.

"Very stupid," he says, a sneer curling his upper lip; "for the subject was not worthy to be placed in so pure a spot as memory's."

My face flushes hotly, for his eyes are turned upon me with a world of meaning in their depths.

Does he dare to call me unworthy?

"You should not let such thoughts occupy you, then," I answer. "If a disagreeable memory comes to me I push it from me. Life is not long enough to spare any of it for brooding over what is past."

"Is that your creed?" asks Lynne, looking at me half curiously. "You must have a wonderfully strong will to carry it out. I wish I possessed that power."

"Yes?"

My voice is purposely absent, and I am rewarded by seeing an expression of impa-

tience pass across his countenance. I have power to move him!

We are on the archery grounds now, and a pretty sight meets our gaze—the ladies in their bright-coloured dresses flitting to and fro the smooth green lawn. All is merriment, and I join in, the maddest, merriest of the whole company.

I know I am looking well in a royal blue plush, with a Tam o'Shanter and skirt of purple hue, and presently quite a crowd gathers round me to offer congratulations, for I have won the big prize of the day. I see all eyes turned upon me in admiration, and exert myself to the utmost, and laugh and jest with the most careless abandon, while Lynne stands a little apart, apparently absorbed in conversation, but I know he loses nothing that occurs in our group.

Once our eyes meet, and there is defiance in his. He is piqued, I suppose, at my indifference, and I laugh even while my heart aches, and I am longing for the day to come to an end. He shall never again see more than indifference in my manner, I vow. Ah, heaven, why do you let me keep that vow? for my heart is breaking with the weight of its pride and love.

Presently there is a move in the direction of the luncheon marquee, and I again find myself at Lynne's side.

"Do you intend staying much longer in London, Miss Westbrooke?" he says, as we near the lawn, and I answer quietly, as the question is put,—

"No, my aunt and I are going down to Lord Harreze's place to spend a few weeks."

Lynne gives a slight start as I speak, and then, looking away over the river, observes, in the ordinary conventional tones,—

"We are bound to meet. I, too, am going to H——"

I am saved the trouble of a reply, for Lady West comes sailing across the lawn towards us, her dark aristocratic face wreathed in smile.

"Here you are at last!" she exclaims.

"Mrs. Carew was wondering where you were. Are you going in to lunch? Mr. Morton will take you."

And having done her duty as hostess she departed, leaving me to the care of Lynne.

"Shall we go in?" he asks, and I put my hand on his arm and we follow the others, who are laughing merrily over the novelty of lunching in the open air, as they term it.

I suppose in time I shall be able to laugh with Lynne as I can with others. Now I am either silent or smilingly sarcastic and scornful. We are neither of us at our ease, and I am sure he is as fully aware of the fact as I am myself.

Of course at the table we all join in conversation, and the luncheon passes off very well, all looking perfectly satisfied, when we once more assemble on the lawn.

There is music, lawn-tennis, more archery, flirting and promenading after this, and I hear someone say in low tones not meant for my ear,

"Miss Westbrooke never seems to tire. She is looking as bright and fresh now as when she arrived!"

She little knows what a sigh of relief I give when auntie comes to me and says it is time to return home. George Graham, who is sitting beside me, heaves another in response, and asks when he is to have the pleasure of seeing me again. I do not notice that Lynne is standing near, but that would not alter my rejoinder.

"I ride in the Row to-morrow, and we go to the opera to-night!"

"Shall I find a welcome to-night?" he whispers.

It is as I look up that I catch sight of Lynne, and I return with a smile,—

"Always!"

And then, with a bow to Lynne, whose face looks very white with the shadow of the large tree thrown over it, I and my aunt turn away.

CHAPTER III.

"Drearly, wearily, ends the day,
The sun goes down with no afterglow;
Then gathers the twilight, cold and grey,
And in shadow is all the world below."

—MAX.

It is a lovely place, down in the heart of the country, where the noise and bustle and smoke of London comes to the memory as a bad dream. All is so peaceful here; the very birds seem to sing a sweeter song, and the faint perfume of the fair flowers is good, indeed.

A little of the peace around me is entering my being, and calming my passionate, troubled soul as I walk down the shady pathways, stooping now and again to gather fragrant dew-kissed blossom. I have had more time to think down here, and sometimes the idea has come to me that I might have been too hasty, that perhaps Lynne could have explained that letter to me, for of late there has been a something in his manner which betokened love. Though outwardly I have ignored this it has rejoiced my heart, and I have been kinder, less scornful towards him during this fortnight of our stay here.

I wander on, up and down the grounds, in and out the winding paths, while the morning sun climbs the heavens and smiles down on the fair earth, sending his golden gleams across the rivers and green meadows.

During my wanderings I come to a little gate, over which two large lilac bushes meet, forming a kind of arch. Away across the field on to which this gives there is a clear, still pond, edged by queen-of-the-meadow and tall sedges, and at one side a chestnut keeps guard.

The sunlight is falling upon the calm water, through the interlacing leaves, and I pause to gaze upon the calm beauty of that little bit of English scenery.

And, while I stand there dreamily gazing, I hear footsteps behind me: no need to turn, I have listened for those footsteps in the past with shy, loving, longing—ah! often, often. And now we are strangers!

"Good morning, Miss Westebrooke; you are one of the early risers?" says Lynne's voice, and then I turn.

He has a bunch of roses in his hand—lovely blossoms of every hue, cream-white, crimson, and delicate pink—and their spicy odour comes to me as he lays the hand that holds them on the top bar of the gate.

"Yes," I say, quietly; "I always was fond of the early morning."

"I remember when—" He breaks off abruptly, and our eyes meet. I know well what he means, and my heart throbs so I fear he must hear. It is the first time he has ever alluded to our past acquaintance.

"That is a lovely bit for an artist!" I say, striving to steady my voice, and he looks away to where the light is growing golden on the water.

"A lovely spot!" he echoes, half sadly. "Some lives are as calm and still as that pool. How is life with you, Miss Westebrooke?"

I feel my face flush and then grow pale, and struggle to make some light retort, but I cannot, with his great, passionate dark eyes upon me, and so I half whisper,

"Life is, I suppose, with me, as with all others, made up of hopes, and disappointments, and dreams that could never become reality while men and women are what they are."

"You have not had any great disappointment," he says, half bitterly, "or you would not wear that calm, unruffled brow."

"I do not wear my heart on my sleeve, Mr. Morton," is my quick rejoinder.

"Have you one?" and his face is white and set as he speaks.

Oh! why do I not give way to my better nature and cry out, "Yes, and it is yours, Lynne; we have both made a great mistake?"

But pride urges, "Hold him back. Let him suffer; ruin your life rather than own that you love him still."

"I believe so," I rejoin. "It is generally supposed that human beings possess a heart in common with other animals."

Lynne does not reply, and, for some moments, we stand side by side in utter silence. Then, suddenly, he holds the roses out to me.

"Madolene," he cries, "will you accept them?"

Too well do I know what he means, and the hot, glad blood mounts into my cheeks, while I feel all the love I have kept in bondage for five long years welling up into my eyes.

He is close beside me now, and the flowers send up their fragrance to me in a sweet appeal. Heaven, I thank thee, thou hast sent me joy at last!

No need to drop my eyelids, no need to hide what is written under there from him now; and I raise my eyes to his face, and, as I lift them, I meet his glance, cold and scornful.

"What a fool you must think me, Miss Westebrooke!" he says, with a short, cynical laugh; and next moment I stand alone with the roses, crushed by him as he turned away, at my feet!

It is evening. The soft, grey twilight has given place to dusk, and the dark curtain is slowly unrolling its sombre folds over the land.

I am standing at one of the long French windows of the drawing-room, watching the shadows creep along the green meadows, and thinking—thinking, as I ever am now—of Lynne Dysart and my past.

The long satin curtains shield me from the view of those within the room, and a tall shrub standing on the stone terrace is between me and those outside; and so it is that when a party of young men come up the wide steps, laughing and talking gaily, they do not observe me, and continue their conversation unrevered.

"You cannot deny that Miss Grante is a beauty! If she is like a doll it is a very perfect one!" says one voice.

"I don't wish to deny anything! She is not my style; she is yours!" retorts another, and I recognise Lynne's tones.

"Well, that is good, and you dance attendance on her all the while you were in London!" cries George Graham; and I know he is laughing by the merriment in his voice.

"There is a brighter star here!" observes a cold, sneering voice, that sends a shudder through me. "What is that Moore says about making love to the 'lips that are near'?"

"May I ask to whom are you alluding?" says George; and I can scarcely believe it is his voice, with that haughty thrill in it.

"By Jove, Graham, you don't know how to do it! You would never make an actor! Who else do I mean but the lovely Miss Westebrooke! I am half gone there myself!" retorts that sneering voice I hate.

"You will be kind enough to leave Miss Westebrooke's name out of such discussions," commences George; and I see the fair, honest face of my loyal-hearted lover flushed and pale, as he stands before the grey-haired roué with the sneering voice; and then Lynne moves forward, and I see his face a little pale, but utterly unconcerned. He takes his cigar out of his mouth, and gently knocks the whitened end off, while he says, with a laugh,—

"Look here, old boy, don't let's have any quarrelling over a woman! I was engaged once, and got well out of it! Once bit twice shy, comprenez vous. I like talking with them, but—"

He does not finish the sentence, but the shrug of the handsome shoulders has a world of language in it, and calls forth a hearty laugh.

"Go in for doing the agreeable to all!" says that unpleasant voice again, and I await Lynne's reply with wildly-beating heart.

"You've hit it, old boy," he answered, slowly, lighting another cigar, and then they all turn and walk down the terrace, their

voices and footsteps echoing on my heart with cold, cruel distinctness.

Oh! the humiliation of it, the bitter, burning shame! I had lifted my eyes love-lit to his, I had let him see how I cared, and this was his reply. Where could I hide me until the shame had become softened, because it belonged to the past.

Fancies of quitting the house at this very moment enter my brain. I have not seen Lynne since he left me at the wicket-gate in the early morning. I thought my cup of mortification was full then. It is overflowing now!

And while I stand here the gong sounds through the old house, and I know that in another moment all the guests will be assembled here awaiting dinner. Shall I go through the sickening ceremony? Shall I take my seat at the table, and smile while my heart breaks?

As well now as another time. While we are guests in the same house we must meet often—always at meals in the evenings, and often during the day. Yes, I will go in, and he shall see how I care. I will ignore all, and be to him still as I have been all along—kindly, gracious—even friendly!

I do not see him at dinner, but in the evening he comes to me with one of his favourite songs in his hand, and asks me to sing, and I rise to go to the piano. My voice will scarcely come at first, as I remember when I last sung that song with him; then I strike the first chords.

"We'll love as they loved of old, dear,

When worth was much and wealth was small;

For the world has grown so cold, dear,

That it's chill lies over all.

True love should not despair, dear,

Let us love as in days gone by;

The lark whose nest is nearest earth

Finds her music in the sky."

Without one quaver I sing on to the end of the music; and when, after a low murmur, someone—I know not who places another piece before me—I commence, never heeding what it is.

Ah, heaven! the words seem written for me! I know Lynne cared once, and that thought is in my mind as I sing with true passion those words of a broken-hearted—yet proudly-loving woman.

"Hung with grey clouds the sky is drooping o'er me,

And so I turn my weary eyes away,

To read again the old delicious story,

And breathe the fragrance of a vanished May.

Oh, sunny hours, long has your sunlight faded,

Oh, roses red, your blossoming is o'er,

I struggle up the thorny hill unaided

For, loving once, my heart can love no more!

Time with his touch once tender hearts will harden,

But thine was fond and gentle as my own,

When roamed we in that sunny rose-rich garden,

And life and love seemed made for us alone.

Ah, dearest, though we only met to sever,

And though no more thy look of love I see,

Those golden moments shall be mine for ever,

And, oh! the rapture of that thought to me!"

My voice breaks and quivers as I commence the last verse; and looking up I catch Lynne's eyes fixed upon me, with that strange questioning, wondering gaze that I have noticed so often of late, and as I finish—

"For me—with gladness I will 'er remember—

For me, its dawn, the roses of its June!"

he stoops over me, and says, in half triumphant tones that jar upon me,—

"Do you like my choice of songs, Miss Westebrooke? You sing them feelingly!"

"I always strive to do so, Mr. Dy-Morton!" I rejoice, turning wearily away. I am tired, and sick at heart with conflicting thoughts. Pride, love and hope are all fighting for the mastery in my breast, and the battle is too strong. I feel I shall sink under it if I remain here much longer.

"Will you not come out on to the terrace; it is a lovely night?" asks Lynne, as I go forward.

"I am going to make my excuses to Lady Harrezo; I am tired!" is my reply. And with a quick, but not displeased look into my face, he draws back, and I go on to where I see my hostess seated at a chess-table, at the far end of the room.

Of course she expresses regret at my "indisposition," and will excuse me "if I am good, and come down in the morning with roses instead of lilies on my cheeks." And then I am free to go to my room and indulge in a "brood" over my life—what it has been, and what I mean to make of its future.

George Graham rises up from some invisible trap in the floor as I make my way to the door; and, as I catch the tender, solicitous smile on his face, like a flash I make up my mind. I will marry him, and put all thoughts of Lynne from me.

With George Graham for my husband, I can make something of my life. He will help me use my wealth wisely; and, in the calm of wifehood, I shall forget the mad passion for a man who seems never to know his own mind two days together!

So I reason during the few seconds that elapse before I stand by my fair-haired lover's side. And when he stoops and asks me if I am really going, I look up into his face and whisper,—

"I am tired; but, if you like, I will stay a little longer."

His face flushes and then pales, while his eyes grow dark and misty, and I know that he understands now that his wishes will be studied by me in the future.

I am half frightened at what I have done when I see the look of supreme happiness on his face, but I have gone too far to retreat.

"Not for the world would I have you stay if you are tired. Good-night!"

He holds my hand in his, not tightly, but lovingly, tenderly, for one moment, and then opens the door for me to pass through. And as the door closes, it seems to me as if I heard a voice whisper, "Too late! too late!"

That door has closed upon my happiness. With my own hand I closed it, and pride held and locked it. Another's happiness stands between me and Lynne Dysart now, and I can never go back!

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT PRIDE CAN DO.

AFTER breakfast this morning, as I was passing the library door, George Graham came hurriedly out, and whispered,—

"Do not go with the others to Farmer T—'s. I wish to tell you something important. Please stay!"

And I looked calmly at him, feeling no fluttering of shy happiness, though I knew well what he wished to say, and told him I would remain at home.

And so I am sitting here in the library, which, to my mind, is the cosiest in the house, waiting for George Graham to come and ask me to be his wife!

While I wait I wonder, with an idle wonder—as if I was thinking of another girl, and not myself—how he will ask me. I remember how that other pleaded for my love. Can I yield myself to George Graham's caresses while these thoughts will come and send the blood coursing madly through my brain? Oh, yes! it is done every day, I tell myself; as if that made the case better!

It is a glorious day; the sunlight, richly golden, lying across the garden where the roses bloom. The sunlight is resting on my head and slanting across my robe of pale-pink plush; and, as I catch sight of my reflection in a glass opposite me, I think of a picture I once saw of a girl in meditation, with an open letter in her hand. My face is not unlike that girl's, and the sunlight gilds the bronze of my hair as it did her painted tresses!

So absorbed am I that I do not hear the door open, do not know that I am no longer alone, until I see George Graham's face reflected side by side with my own in that large, dark, oak-framed glass.

I rise, or try to rise, but he kneels beside me, just where the sunlight falls upon his upturned face, and lays his hands on my shoulders, thus gently forcing me to remain seated.

And I sit there gazing at him, half-sorrowfully, half-admiringly—who could help admiring that honest, manly face?—while he gazes back at me as though he would be content to remain thus for ever!

I am not made of stone, and I cannot remain very long under that passionate scrutiny with calmness. So I make a movement, as though about to rise, and then he speaks.

"Madoline, my darling! May I say my darling? Was I mad, presumptuous, last night, to think there was a deeper meaning than friendship in your words? Do you love me? Will you be my wife?"

The words flow almost incoherently from his lips, and he is very pale now; he has not altered his position, but kneels there before me in the sunlight, pleading for what I can never give, and yet I am going to say "Yes" to that last question.

"I will be your wife," I return, drooping my eyes as I lay one hand on his shoulder. I do not say "I love you," for I feel that I cannot lie to him; and yet I feel like a liar when he gathers me to him and calls me "his love," and "his life," and I shudder when he lays his lips on mine in our betrothal kiss, not because I dislike him, but I remember that there is only one who should have the right to caress me—the one who is king and lord over my heart.

George does not think me cold, though I sit and listen almost in silence to his conversation—if it can be so called where only one speaks.

He rattles on about the changes he must make in the old house for his bride, asks me where I would like this, that, and the other, till my head is in a whirl, and it is with a feeling of thankfulness that I look up when I hear the sound of footsteps on the stone terrace.

My lover mutters something wicked, I am sure, by the look of annoyed shame on his face, as he turns and apologizes to me for what I did not hear; and then we both rise, and he goes away, pausing a moment ere he leaves me to whisper,—

"Soon, soon, my love, you must give yourself to me, and then no one can, or shall, part us!"

And I echo the words "soon, soon" drearily, wearily. Yes, it had better be soon, and then I shall know that there is no hope, and my heart will grow quiet at last.

Now, there is ever the vague passionate hope that Lynne and I will become lovers again; that the past will be explained, and the future open before me, bright and beautiful, because it is to be spent at his side.

Such thoughts are madness, I know, and so it will be better, far better, to wed George soon, and go away from these scenes that will ever hold bitter, sweet, memories for me.

I know whose are those footsteps, and go swiftly from the room, and up the long corridor that leads to my own apartments.

Not yet can I meet Lynne. I must sit down, and, by continued thought on the subject, accustom myself to the idea of being George Graham's betrothed wife.

When next I look upon Lynne it must be with eyes and heart free from passion, for I am to be another's wife.

Drawing a chair to the window, from which I can see the fair world with the golden glory of summer sunlight upon it, I seat myself to think.

What have I done? Of late days I have grown to think I was mistaken in the past, but Lynne's almost deliberate insult since has

shattered that thought, and roused all my hot pride.

For pride's sake I am going to wed one man, loving another. It is cruel and wicked of me, I know, but I do not care for that, if I can preserve myself from the odium of being called "the girl whom Lynne jilted, you know," and from the pity of Lynne himself.

I grow tired of sitting here—tired of my own company—and, taking up my garden hat, a large quaint-looking thing, trimmed with pink Madras muslin, I go down the wide staircase and out into the garden, meeting no one on my way.

Oh, it is lovely out here! The world is all so beautiful! Up in the grand old chestnuts, whose leaves are dancing in the sunlight, the birds are singing with a blithesome mirth that, spite of my sorrow, makes my heart leap in response.

A soft, low murmur is in the air—a murmur of life. It comes from blossom, tree, bird, and insect, and fills the air with ineffable sweetness.

In the distance lies the lake, calm and reposeful under the warmth of the day-god; sunlight—golden, glorious sunlight—everywhere. Oh, Heaven! send some into my life too!

I have strayed into the rose-garden, where the air is laden with sweetness that nearly overpowers the senses—golden gloire de Dijons, creamy pink-hearted tea-roses, Marshal Neil, reine Marguerites, Mrs. Langtry, Louis Quatorze—they are all here in well-disposed confusion, and I pass my hand lovingly over them, half unconscious, for their sweetness has intoxicated me, and sent me to dreamland.

And, while I stand here, Lynne comes to me, comes and lays his hand on mine, and draws me to him, holding me in his arms as though we were still betrothed lovers; and, for a few moments, I remain quite lost in a maze of love and bewilderment.

Then the promise I have given flashes across my mind, and, with a cry, I wrench myself free. How dare he come to me like this after that scene by the wicket-gate a few mornings back? Perhaps he will tell me I am a fool this time!

"Mr. Dysart-Morton, how dare you!" I cry; "do you know that I am the promised wife of your friend, George Graham?"

"Friend? Curse him," is Lynne's reply; then he turns to me with white, haggard face, and white quivering lips. "Madoline!" he cries, "oh! my love, tell me you do not mean what you said; tell me it is only to try me!"

"It is true. I am engaged to Mr. Graham," I answer, coldly. "I have, could have no motive in telling an untruth about the matter."

I put out my hand and pluck a glorious rose and hold it to me, apparently indifferent. I harden my face and stand before him proud and calm, while he pleads for the love which is his, but which my pride will not let me avow.

Why is it that the more he pleads the harder my heart grows? A moment ago I asked for sunlight, and Lynne has brought it and offered it me and I deliberately put it from me, choosing the darkness, because he has wounded my pride.

He is suffering, I tell myself; let him suffer. I have had to bear it, it is his turn now; but I forgot the years of bitter agony I am giving myself in gratifying these thoughts.

There is a sorrowful reproach in his eyes as he turns them upon me, and it hurts me, but does not melt the ice that is growing round my heart.

"Is there no truth in woman, or woman's glances?" he mutters, hoarsely.

"Oh! yes," I reply, flippantly, "when, like Sairey Gamp, they feel so 'disposed'."

"Oh, Heavens! Madoline!" he cries, catching my hands in his, and crushing them in his excitement, till I nearly call aloud with pain.

"How dare you trifle with a man as you

have with me? I dared to hope, fool that I was, that you cared for me still. As if a woman could love so long."

"Care for you still!" I echo, scornfully. "I never cared for you, and never could. Release me, Mr. Morton, you are a coward; release me, and seek some other field to pursue your game in."

He stands, still holding my hands, utterly speechless for some moments, gazing fixedly into my face; then with a light, bitter laugh—which I shall never forget—throws my hands from him with such force that I stagger back.

"Release you! Thank Heaven, I can grant your request so easily. Coward! What do you think of a woman who can treat a man as Miss Westebrooke has me? Bah! such as you are not worth anger!"

With these words he turns away, leaving me alone with the roses, with the sunlight, and my own wilfully shattered happiness. I do not sink down among the roses and bemoan my fate to them. I do not ring my hands and cry aloud to the heavens.

No! I turn my eyes wearily upon the rare beauties of the garden, my head lifted proudly, and tell myself that I have acted rightly, that my pride called for such behaviour, and my heart feels like a stone in my bosom!

Yes, I know that never again—though the world will call me happy, rich, and prosperous—shall I call happiness my own, and I turn away from the sunshine and go back to my room, where I draw the curtains and lie down on my couch to seek peace in oblivious sleep.

CHAPTER V.

"Ah! what shall I be at fifty?
Should Nature keep me alive;
If I find the world so bitter,
When I am but twenty-five?"

—TENNYSON.

We are all back in London; by "we" I mean the world of fashion, for in the pride and arrogance of our riches and birth we never count the "people" as part of the living world.

I envy them sometimes when I see a pair of happy lovers trudging merrily and bravely through the mud and slush, heedless of discomfort, because content and trust reign in their hearts. But I am not all belonging to the fashionable world.

I and my aunt are due at a ball to-night, and I am thinking ruefully of the rain that I shall have to run through from the carriage to the house, and wondering what auntie would say if I proposed remaining at home.

Christmas is very near, and real Christmas weather has set in; snow has been falling all day—snow that melted as soon as it touched the earth or pavement—and now at half-past three in the afternoon the streets present anything but a pleasant sight—mud and slush everywhere, on roads, pavements, and pedestrains.

A dreary, hopeless sight is London in the winter! I think it never did look so hopeless as it does now, for the pretty, white snow has given place to a slow, dull, mizzling rain, and a faint fog is creeping up from somewhere, leaving no distant view, only the dull, ugly street.

I turn away from the window and go over to the fireplace, where I kneel down resting my elbows on the soft cushion of a prie-dieu chair.

I always like forming pictures in the fire; like Lizzie, in "Our Mutual Friend," it is my one solace now; in the glowing embers I see things ever new, nothing there reminds me of the irrevocable past.

A ring comes at the front door while I kneel there in the semi-darkness, with the warm glow of the fire on my face, and I shudder, even in my thick crimson velvet robe, as a gust of wind sweeps through the house; but I do not give a thought as to whom it may be.

Presently the door opens and a man's figure

comes across the room to me. It is George Graham, and I rise with a little cry of surprise, not unmixed with pleasure.

I like my lover, love him with a quiet sisterly love that cannot ripen into a warmer sentiment, and he is always so pleasant a companion!

During these past months he has urged me continually to name an early day for our marriage; and though I know it would be far better to have it over, and go away from London and its old memories, I cannot find it in my heart to say the words that will effectually put me away from Lynne and Lynne's love. Such is the inconsistency of my nature.

"All alone?" says George, bending over me, for I do not rise. "What are you thinking of, sweetheart?"

"I was wishing auntie would let me stay at home to-night!" I reply, with a rauf sigh, and George laughs.

"That is the first time I ever heard a young lady express a wish to absent herself from a ball to which she had been invited!" he cries. "Well, it is not the ball, it is the rain which I object to," I return, with an echo of his laugh.

"You will come, dearest?" he asks. "I must be there, the master would never forgive me were I to absent myself; and you know what an evening it will be to me without you!"

"I was not really in earnest!" is my rejoinder; and then we commence talking on the different topics of the day.

"By-the-bye, I believe our wedding won't be the only one of the season!" remarks George, when he has extracted a half promise from me to become his wife early in the New Year.

"No!" I say, only half-interested; marriages have not the charm for me which they held six years ago. "Whose is it?"

"Why, I am not sure, but it is bruited about that Lynne Dysart-Morton is engaged to Miss —. They will make a handsome couple; she so fair, and he so dark! You ought to have chosen a dark man. However did you come to care for me?"

So he rattles on in the deepening dusk, unconscious of the sudden paling of my cheek, of the wild unreasonable throb of anger and agony that swept over me at his words.

Lynne engaged—going to be married! Oh, the agony of that thought, and yet did I think he would remain single. It could, must have come in the natural course of things, but it falls upon me like a knell of death, and makes it clearer to me than it has ever been before that he and I are really and truly separated for aye and aye.

"Why are you so silent, Madeline?" asks George, noticing my preoccupation at length, and I rouse myself sufficiently to laugh as I answer.

"Because you have given me no time to speak, but have been rattling on about marriage, and marriages all the time!"

George's face grows serious at my retorts, and he stoops over me so that he can see my face by the flickering firelight.

"How can I help but talk of what is ever in my mind?" he asks, softly. "I want my bride so much!"

I am spared having to give a reply, for just then the door springs open, and a footman enters, bearing a lighted lamp, and a few minutes after the gong goes for dinner. We are dining early to-night on account of the ball, and I rise quickly, saying to George,

"Come along, as you are here! Jennings is sure to have put a knife and forks for you!"

And so he comes in. Of course we have a pleasant meal. George is with us, and he always manages to keep up a merry, yet amusing ball of conversation.

He does not stay after dinner is over, for he has to go home and dress before he can escort us to the Duchess B—'s reception or ball; and then I go up to my room and submit myself to my maid.

I have chosen a shell-pink plush, over silver grey satin; the long train and polonaise being

heavily trimmed with Breton lace. For my ornaments I have pearls, and I know when I survey myself in the long cheval glass that none will eclipse me!

There are moments when I feel fiercely proud of my beauty, when I long to let Lynne see how others seek after me and court my notice; and then there always comes the remembrance that whatever happened in the past he has pleaded in vain in the present. Whatever else is, my pride has been appeased.

Isa Grante is here looking fairy-like in a pale blue gauzy dress that suits her fair, waxy skin; but I have been pronounced the belle, and a thrill of pleasure ran through me at the verdict; not that I had outvantaged that other girl, but that Lynne should hear. I heard someone say that Miss Westebrooke reminded him of a picture by Greuz, and it pleased me.

George and I have been dancing to the lovely music of Weit Vonder. Once or twice as we whirled round I saw Lynne and Miss Grante waltzing together; but I have lost sight of them now, and George is leading me to the conservatory.

It is deliciously cool here. Soft strains of music come from the distant ball-room, and the sharp, clear tinkle of fountains fill the air that is laden with perfume of many flowers. Tall shrubs in handsome china vases are disposed gracefully about, and to a seat near one of these George leads me.

"I shall not be ten minutes!" he says, as he turns away.

I have asked him to bring me an ice; and of course he must rush off at once on the errand. I smile to myself as I think of his great and honest love for my unworthy self, and then my thoughts wander away from my immediate surroundings.

Suddenly I hear Lynne's voice, sounding as if it comes from my side, whispering in soft low accents,—

"Dearest!"

With a start I look round; but there is no one near, and then through the thick polished leaves, where they cannot see me, I behold Lynne and Isa Grante.

She is looking very lovely with that flush of pleasure on her face; and Lynne, Lynne is gazing down at her while he holds her hands in his—and I know, though I cannot hear, that is asking her to be his wife.

A cold numb feeling comes over me as I see her lift her eyes shyly to his face, and her voice sounds very clear and soft as she half whispers,—

"Yes, Lynne, I can trust my life to you without fear!"

And then I hear him say that he cannot give her a love good enough, that his heart is seared from contact with the world; but he will strive to make her happy. I do not hear her reply. The room is whirling round with me, and a thousand ocarates seem roaring in my ears when George's footsteps rouse me.

I must not let him see that I am troubled. I knew that Lynne and I were parted long ago. Have I not engaged myself to George Graham? What, then, is Lynne's marriage to me? Nothing! It should be nothing to me, and I strive to gather my senses and smile up at George when he hears me; and he gives back an answering smile as he asks,—

"Have I been long, Madeline? You see I got the ice!" holding it towards me; "but it was a fight, I can tell you!"

"Yes!" I reply, as I take it from him. "I am sorry I gave you so much trouble!"

"Don't talk like that to me, please, Madeline. I don't like it!" says George, in a hurt tone.

At sound of our voices these two on the other side start. I can see them, but George cannot; and I see Lynne's face grow suddenly pale, as my voice, mingled with that of my lover, falls upon his ear; and then he puts out his hand and draws hers through his arm, and leads her away.

George catches sight of them as they enter the ball-room and turns to me—his eyes tell

of tender pleading, and I make up my mind that I will promise to marry him whenever he wishes—only making one very feeble last struggle for my freedom.

"Shall we go back to the ball-room?" I ask, knowing well that he will tell me no!

"No!" he returns, laying his hand on mine. "Not until I have asked you this. When are you going to become my wife? When will you give yourself to me, Madeline, my love?"

He is so terribly in earnest, it is a thousand pities I cannot reciprocate such a love; but human love is not the "growth of human will," and I cannot give what he so richly deserves.

Still I can be kind, and he need never know that my love for him is not as strong as his for me. So I put up my hand and lift my eyes to him as I say,—

"I will marry you whenever you like, George!"

A look of rapture comes into the honest eyes, and a bright, glad smile lights up his handsome face.

"My love, my love!" he cries; "you are too good to me!" He has his arms about me, and his lips are upon mine; and I look up and see Lynne standing at the entrance to the conservatory.

"Release me, George!" I whisper, hurriedly; "we are not alone!" but Lynne has disappeared when he turns round.

"Who did you see?" he asks, a little impatiently.

"I saw a man's figure in the doorway," is my reply; and then, the ice broken after his raptures, we return to the topics of the everyday world; and, after awhile, to the ball-room.

Ah, how glad am I when my aunt proposes home! Body and mind are fatigued, and I know my face is very pale when I lean back in the carriage and bid our friends good-night.

CHAPTER VI.

"And is it that the haze of grief
Makes former gladness loom so great?
The lowness of the present state,
That sets the past in this relief?"

Mr aunt and I are staying down at Branksome, a pretty little village a mile from the busy, thriving town of M——. Christmas is over, and we are all busy preparing for the New Year's Eve ball.

Auntie is well-known for her country-house balls, and she tells me this is to be an extra successful one, as it will be my last as Miss Westebrooke.

Yes, I am to be married to Lieutenant George Graham on New Year's Day. My wedding-dress, a white plush, with robes of lace and satin, lies in my room upstairs, with veil and dainty slippers, and gloves.

Outside the world is white and lovely, with here and there a glitter of polished holly leaves and scarlet berries peeping out; white and pure as my bridal robe is the world is to-day.

They tell me I shall be a snow maiden if there is not a thaw to-morrow, and I think grimly of the snow-capped mountains and their hearts of fire.

George is staying with his uncle, who lives a few miles from Holly House—my home—and he rides here nearly every day on some pretext or other.

Lynne's place is somewhere here, I know; but I will not ask. I never let his name cross my lips.

I do not know if he is staying here, or if he is in London still. I know nothing of what is going on, for I never read the papers now. I always fear seeing Lynne's marriage with Isa Grante announced, and so the days go on with a kind of drowsy monotony.

We are quite alone—my aunt and I—and I never go out visiting, making the coming nuptials my excuse. We are sitting, my aunt half-asleep, I reading, in the study one afternoon, when we hear carriage wheels coming

round the drive, and I throw aside my book half-pleased at the interruption, and wait expectantly, wondering who our visitors are.

A few seconds elapse, and then Jeames enters announces "Mrs. Graham and Miss Dysart!"

I start at the last name. Miss Dysart! Surely not his sister! Ah, yes, I know those dark eyes; she has Lynne's eyes, but they are not so beautiful.

"You are Madeline Westebrooke!" she says, as our hands and eyes meet, and something in her voice and manner makes me flush.

Of course she knows all about that olden affair. He told me he never had a secret from his sister. Ah, if I had only spoken out then, if I had only gone to him with that letter, and asked for an explanation! But regrets are useless. Would that I could let the dead past bury its dead.

"She has come down for the wedding!" says Mrs. Graham, turning to me with a smile. "So I thought I would bring her over to see the other bride-elect."

"Whose wedding are you speaking of, Mrs. Graham?" I ask, a sickening dread of her reply coming over me.

I am standing with the light full on my face. She cannot see me well from her seat on the divan, though, but Lynne's sister is beside me, and I see her start and look keenly at me, when my face grows cold and rigid at Mrs. Graham's careless rejoinder.

"Lynne's, of course. Isa Grante's father lives twenty miles from here, but in a straight line; so Lizzie is to go with her brother!"

Lynne's marriage, and then mine! Ah! once his wedding-day was to be mine also!

Mis Dysart puts out her hand, and says, in a voice very different from the one in which she first spoke,—

"Come into the garden, Miss Westebrooke. I should like to see it; I am so fond of flowers."

And so we go out into the white shrouded grounds, each forgetting that there are no flowers in December. When we pause beside a great laurel that has shaken some of the snow from its heavily-laden branches, which stand out richly green among the white, and she speaks, I know that, in speaking of flowers, she made the only excuse for getting me alone with her that she could think of at the moment.

"Miss Westebrooke," she says, "will you think me impudent if I ask you to tell me what parted you and my brother? I am not asking out of idle curiosity, believe me."

For a moment I stand dumbly before her; then, with a cry that has in it the sound of a deep despair, I go forward a step. Yes, I will tell her! She looks true and earnest. I will tell her, and perhaps—. Ah! what am I thinking of? There is no perhaps now!

Word for word I tell her, keeping back nothing. She grows very pale while I speak, and then she puts her arms round me, and our tears mingle as I whisper,

"It was my silly pride. I thought I could be happy without him, and that he was only marrying me because he had given me his word of honour; since, I have fancied I might have been mistaken."

"Mistaken!" she echoes. "Ah, how woefully! My brother was ill, very ill, after he returned to us, and, in his ravings, begged you to explain your sudden change; then he would grow sarcastic, and again plead with you. I used to hate you, but, when I saw your face to-day I felt it was the face of an honest, pure-minded woman; and when you paled at mention of Lynne's marriage, I determined to ask if there had not been some mistake."

"But," I say, lifting my head wearily, "what did he mean by saying he was in honour bound to marry me?"

"You should have spoken to him—have told him," returns my companion, a trifle sternly. "I saw that letter; it went on to say that he loved you more than life—more than all the world beside—and that, were you not already engaged—in the face of my father's request—he would still seek you as his wife."

"May I ask what was that request?" I say, my own voice sounding odd to my ears, so cold and calm, and yet there is a wild, maddening despair raging within me.

"I tell the story of a father's shame and weakness, in complying with your request, Miss Westebrooke," she rejoins, flushing; "but in justice's name, I will tell it."

Bowing my head in acknowledgment, I await her words, feeling only half interest; for what does it matter now? Lynne is lost to me for ever.

"My father was—he is dead now—a gambler," commences Lizzie Dysart, "and one night he lost very heavily; and to meet this so-called debt of honour he signed another's name on a cheque for the amount! The forgery was discovered, and the man threatened to prosecute unless the money was returned in a given time. He could not do this; but there was then a rich millowner's daughter in London, who fell in love with my brother at first sight, and my father determined that a marriage should take place between them, and so gain for himself the money required. He wrote and told Lynne this. You know his reply."

"Did the man prosecute?" I ask, as she pauses.

"No, an uncle of ours died out in India, and his wealth spared us that disgrace. Lynne had to take his name with the money, half of which—the money, I mean—he made over to my father and mother."

We both stand there in silence for some time, the tinkling of sleigh bells coming to us through the clear, crisp air. My heart feels ice-bound, though there is a fire there.

"I am glad you have told me," I murmur at last. "I have felt sometimes that he loved me, but my pride—"

"Pride!" echoes Lizzie, and I flush at the scorn in her voice. "Oh, Madeline Westebrooke, how could you let pride stand between you and happiness—between yourself and the man you love!"

"I cannot tell. It is so, and I cannot recall it now," I rejoin, wearily. "I am to be married in four days, and then my life will begin afresh. Come, let us return to the house."

And so we go back—I with a strange sensation of having heard a sad tale not concerning myself, Lizzie Dysart looking pale and grave; but we are friends, and shall remain so, I feel sure, for all time now.

My aunt gives me a keen glance as we re-enter the room, but she does not speak, neither does she question me when we are once more alone; she only puts her hand on my shoulder and says softly,—

"Madoline, you look as if you had heard good news, but that it had come too late."

"It is even so, ma chérie; the mists are cleared, but the sweet flowers have withered and died that once grew on the landscape, the cloud has lifted and shown me a long bare stretch of land with no—"

"Hush, my child!" she interrupts, "do not speak so; all may come right, and you are to be married soon."

"Yes, and I loved Lynne in the past. I love him now, and he loves me yet. Our lives must of a necessity be very happy," is my retort; and I look sadly into her face, wondering what she will say; but she does not reply to my words.

She draws back with a shocked face, and commences gathering up her crevel silks and pieces of satin, and then she turns to me, saying,—

"You had better lie down and rest; you are looking pale!" and I go without a word.

Poor auntie, she has a good, tender heart, but she has a wholesome fear of Mrs. Grundy. She would never have persuaded me to marry George without loving him, were he ever so rich, or a duke of the royal blood; but now my wedding-day is so near, she would not have me draw back, even if I broke my heart in marrying. Scandal is her horror.

I never heard her speak a word of scandal

during all the time I have lived with her; and she would never feel comfortable among her old friends, I feel sure, were I to break my engagement now.

She need not fear. I have broken my own heart; I do not wish to break George's also. He shall never know.

CHAPTER VII. AND LAST.

This is my wedding morn. Last night's ball was a great success, and Lynne and his bride were here. They are staying to be present at my wedding, because the two bridegrooms are such old friends and near neighbours.

Well, it does not matter much. We met calmly, as friends should do, and when we meet again after our honeymoon trips I shall have really gained the calm I now assume.

The ceremony is to be performed here. I wished to have a quiet wedding, but in that I have been overruled. The house is one mass of decorations, both in the matter of upholstery and flowers. The great drawing-room is hung with white satin, looped with snowdrops and laurel-leaves and bunches of scarlet hollyberries.

Vases of hothouse flowers stand about in lovely confusion and perfume the whole air, and the world looks so calm and pure in her glittering robes, with the sunlight changing it into a thousand glorious hues.

My maid will be here to dress me presently. I have requested to be left alone for half-an-hour to think. But my thinking does not amount to much, for thoughts get mixed—only one stands out clearly to-day. I am about to be married, and the man to whom I have given my soul's love will be here with his bride to witness my nuptials.

I can hear the voices of my bridesmaids as they laugh merrily over their dressing, and think of the time when I could laugh like that.

George, Lynne, and his wife and sister are coming together, and I wonder idly which road they will come, and how Isa Dysart-Morton will be dressed.

All idle, useless thoughts, and then there is a knock at the door and my aunt comes in. She is already dressed and looks very handsome in her garnet-velvet and lace with diamond ornaments.

"You must let Lizette dress you now," she says. "I have come to superintend."

And so I submit myself to their hands, sitting pale and silent while they brush out my bronze hair and pile it in waving masses on my head, like a crown with pearls amongst it, standing up when they tell me to be robed in my bridal attire.

Then they lead me to a long glass that reflects the whole figure, to admire the result. It is a lovely picture I see there. My face is white and still as that of a statue, only my dark-fringed eyes are glowing with the turmoil that is within me.

My bridal dress is perfect; the rich soft plungh that shades like ripples of moonlight, with every movement, falls back from the front and reveals the lace-trimmed skirt, and bunches of orange-blossoms. A bunch—a spray of these sweet-smelling things lies on my long train as though it had fallen there.

Oh! Lynne, Lynne! if I had been robed thus to receive you, how my heart would rejoice at sight of that lovely form and beautiful white face with its crown of bronze and pearls! Ah! my face would grow warm then. George Graham will, indeed, marry an ice-maiden.

No thought of him will ever thrill me, nor quicker one pulse of my being. I turn away. I am ready. I wish the others were here. I hate waiting at all times.

"You have made me dress too soon, auntie!" I say. "George is not here."

"He should have been here half-an-hour ago," responds she, "but the roads are in a dreadfully slippery state, and I suppose they have to walk the horses."

"I detest waiting," I reply, almost impatiently, as I go to the window from which I can see the road.

And as I stand there I see a carriage turn the bend, the carriage that contains my love and my bridegroom. And then the horses suddenly slip; there is a cry, a woman's cry, and the carriage lies over in the snow with one man under its wheels.

I cannot remain here calmly waiting, and without pausing to put anything round my shoulders, I open the door and pass swiftly down the stairs, never pausing till I have reached the garden, where I meet the affrighted coachman.

"Oh! miss!" he gasps, "Mr. Lynne is—"

Without waiting for another word, I dash past him towards the roadway, where that figure lies crushed under the wheels of the overturned brougham. I know what he was going to say—"Mr. Lynne is dead."

On, on I go, the long train of my dress sweeping over the whitened earth with a dull swish. On, on, till I reach the scene of the accident.

I do not see the others. I only see a man's form lying still, on his face in the snow, and with a great cry in which is all the pent-up love and regret of years, I throw myself beside him, murmuring, brokenly,

"Lynne, Lynne, my love! Oh, look up, if 'tis only for one moment, and hear me say that it is all a mistake—that I have loved you always, and you only!"

But the figure never moves, though my warm arms are laid about the neck, and my warm breath fans the cheek. There is no sign of life.

"My love!" I whisper again. "Do you not hear me? It is Madoline! Have you forgotten, love?"

And then a hand is laid on my arm, and someone draws me back from that dead form, and I see George Graham's fair hair dabbled in blood—George Graham's dead white face lying on the snow. He has been spared the sorrow of a loveless marriage.

I turn to see who it is that has drawn me away, and meet Lynne's eyes, dark with passionate love and pain. His face is white as that of the dead at our feet, and his voice is harsh with agony when he speaks.

"Come away, Madoline!" he says, using my Christian name unconsciously, and I let him lead me away. We go up the road together in silence, passing the men who are coming to bear that quiet form to the house which he left last night in health and strength. When we reach the portico Lynne turns to me and says,—

"Come to the rose-house to-night—I mean at dusk. I wish to speak with you!"

I bow my head in silent acquiescence. I cannot speak now. I feel stricken dumb. George, my handsome, loyal-hearted lover dead, dead, and this was to have been our wedding day.

I cannot cry for him, but I feel as I go back to my room that I would give up my own life for his. So young, so loved, so worthy all that I never gave him! I feel almost as though I were guilty of his death.

My aunt comes to me presently, and without a word removes my wedding garments, and then goes away and leaves me, as I beg of her to do, to my own thoughts.

An awful stillness reigns in the house, and as the light begins to wane I feel almost afraid to sit here by myself.

Strange sounds seem to be in the room, figures passing to and fro. Once or twice I fancy George is in the room, and that he is speaking to me, asking me to do something and I cannot understand.

And then I rise and put on my cloak. I will go to Lynne. He is waiting for me and I want to hear what he has to say. I meet no one on my way, and once out in the garden I run, swiftly, till I come to the rose-house. There are no roses now.

Lynne is there, his face very white. He

comes to meet me and draws me inside, but he does not attempt to embrace me, though his eyes are dark with love, and I hold myself away from him, for a good and pure woman stands between us, and I know he will respect himself and me in honour of her.

"I have come," I say, hurriedly. "What is it you wish to say?"

"You said some words this morning which I should like you to explain. You spoke of some mistake," he says, and his voice does not sound like his own.

"I know not if it be wise to attempt an explanation now," I return. "We are parted, you and I—"

"By whose fault?" he asks, passionately. "Madoline, tell me. Let me have the knowledge that you once cared for me if it was so. Oh! how you have made me suffer, and for no fault of mine!"

"Ah, Lynne, I know it now!" I cry. "It was all a mistake. Listen!" and quickly and with vehement passion which I cannot stifle, I tell him of my stupid, madly stupid, error.

"Madoline!" he whispers, putting out his hand to me as we face one another in the grey light of winter's dusk. "And for that we are parted. Oh, my love, my love! how could you!"

A great dizziness has been coming over all the time I have been talking, and when he cries out so I put up my hand as though he had given me a blow on the head.

"Don't, Lynne," I almost shriek, "I have enough to suffer now!" and then I fall back senseless in his arms.

* * * * *

Three years ago! Three long weary years since I stood at my window watching for the coming of my bridegroom, and saw him killed at the ford.

Three years of seeking after forgetfulness since that illness which bid fair to take my life, for when Lynne bore me into the house and my aunt sought to restore me to consciousness, I awoke only to rave of lost love, and George Graham's fearful death.

I went away from England when I was pronounced convalescent, and travelled from place to place; and now, after three years, I have come back to my native land.

It is summer-time, and the air is balmy and soft with a faint low murmur in it, and scented with the sweet scent of summer flowers.

Some one comes into the room as I stand here thinking over the past, of my pride and its bitter punishment, and I turn languidly. Shall I ever forget the rush of passionate joy that thrills me, the gladness that seems half pain when I behold Lynne standing in the sunlight that floods through the window, with outstretched hands and pleading eyes!

Without question I go to him. Something tells me that he is free. He would never come to me were it not so.

He holds me to him tenderly and in silence for some minutes. Then I draw back as I look up into the face that, like my own, has grown sadder and graver in these years, and say,—

"Your wife?"

"Is dead. She died of consumption a year ago," he says, and I feel no jealousy now of that dead girl.

I love him all the more for the tender reverence and sorrow in his voice as he speaks.

We stand talking. I cannot say how long. We cannot yet go to my aunt. There is so much to explain—so many years of separation to make up for. But after a time I say that we must go to her.

"Have you quite forgiven me, Lynne?" I ask, and we turn away from the sunny window.

"Forgiven you, darling? Yes!" he returns, drawing me to himself once more. "But, remember this. In the future come to me first, and judge after. Too many a life has been wrecked, as mine nearly has, by 'A Woman's Pride'!"

[THE END.]

A GOOD CATCH.

—o—

"MR. AINSLEY ARBUTHNOT" was the name beautifully engraved on the elegant visiting-card which a servant presented to Evelyn Ogden, as she stood before a tall pier-glass, admiring the sweep of her white satin train, and the wave of her glossy black hair.

"You are ready, I suppose, Sybil?" she asked, with a disdainful glance at her shy little cousin, whose modest toilette of wine-coloured cashmere hardly suited Miss Evelyn's elaborate taste.

"Oh, yes!" Sybil answered, promptly. "I have been ready for some time."

"Why don't you put some white lace around your neck?" Evelyn asked, critically.

"You look so—oh, so plain."

She was going to say "countryfied," but repented of that and amended her speech.

"I haven't any lace," Sybil said, frankly.

"I'll lend you my fichu," said Evelyn, less in a spirit of generosity than in a wish to have Sybil look semi-respectable.

"Thanks," was the gentle reply; "but I would rather not borrow any fine feathers, Evelyn, dear. Don't mind me. I couldn't look anything but plain if I tried, and it will suit me better to creep into a quiet corner where no one will see me. I can enjoy your triumphs, cousin, for I am sure you will have them. You look beautiful to-night!"

"Do you think so?" said Evelyn, with a conscious glance towards the mirror. "I am glad this dress is so becoming. Mr. Arbuthnot adores white."

"I almost wish I hadn't said I would go," observed Sybil, looking down at her own plain dress. "I am afraid I shall disgrace you, Evelyn. I don't even know how to behave, for I never heard of a progressive angling party before."

"Oh, it's simple enough!" said Evelyn, buttoning her long gloves. "There will be a lot of tubs, or punch bowls probably, and we will all have gilt fishing-rods and lines, with hooks on them. The fish are hollow, and have prizes inside. We all fish for them, and nobody knows what he is going to get till the fish are opened. There is to be a gold ring in one to-night, they say. It will be like wedding-cake. But you needn't worry, Sybil; I'll tell you what to do."

Sybil was not worrying. She was perfectly quiet—in fact, so much so, that Evelyn fancied her brilliant escort would not be at all pleased with this unexpected addition to their party.

Sybil had come to London to try and get a position as a teacher, and Evelyn did not fancy taking her out in society; but Mr. Ogden had a tender feeling for his sister's child, and commanded his daughter to show her all the honours due to a distinguished guest.

"My cousin, Miss Weir, Mr. Arbuthnot," said Evelyn, presenting Sybil to the gentleman who awaited them in the parlour.

Ainsley Arbuthnot's keen eyes had swept in an instant over the white satin gown, with the mental observation,—

"Overdressed!"

They rested now upon the slender, little figure in the soft, rich-coloured cashmere, and they lighted with genuine admiration.

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Weir," he said, with that quiet yet impressive manner which is such a valuable gift.

Sybil murmured something, but her eyelids fell before that magnetic glance.

How handsome he was, and how perfectly self-possessed! It was no wonder that Evelyn was always talking about Ainsley Arbuthnot.

He was rich, too, they said, though Sybil thought very little about wealth, save as some far-away thing which she would probably never possess in all her lifetime.

The "progressive angling" went on at Mrs. Bayard's house, where Sybil felt as though she were in fairyland, among flowers and

fragrance, and parti-coloured lights, that shone on a crowd of elegantly-dressed men and women, who moved about in a scene of rare beauty and splendour.

"Must I fish, too?" Sybil asked, nervously, as she looked shyly at the superb cut-glass bowls, in which artificial goldfish were swimming in perfumed water. "I would rather not."

"Don't be afraid," said Arbuthnot, kindly. "They all make botches of it."

"Aren't you going to fish, Arbuthnot?" called out an exquisite youth, who wore a primrose and an eye-glass. "It's no end of a lark, 'pon honour! It's such fun to see those stupid little tin things wriggle!"

"Is it, really?" said Arbuthnot, with imperceptible gravity, while the speaker began to dangle his absurd little line in the water.

"Do you know what that makes me think of?" he continued, in a low tone, which only Sybil heard. "It reminds me of a definition which I once heard given for a fishing-rod—'a stick with a worm at one end and a fool at the other.'"

Sybil broke out into a merry laugh, which made Evelyn turn round to see what the fun was.

"Won't you try now?" said Mr. Arbuthnot. "There are not very many people at the table."

"Yes," said Evelyn, sweetly; "let us try now, by all means. Do you know, Mr. Arbuthnot, there is to be a dance after the fishing, and we ladies have to fish our partners out of yonder bowl?"

"How momentous!" Arbuthnot exclaimed. "I hope heaven may be kind to me."

Evelyn smiled at him, and Sybil, having a sense of being in the way, moved towards the table.

"Come, ladies!" cried the youth with the eye-glass. "There are as good fish in the sea as ever yet were caught."

"Allow me!" said Dick Travers, a brother of the hostess, to whom Sybil had been presented, and she found herself in possession of one of the gilded willow rods, which were gaily adorned with bows of ribbon.

She cast in her line, and almost immediately the others were cast in alongside.

"I am fishing for you, Miss Weir," said Dick, boldly. "I want a good partner, and you look as though you danced divinely."

"I am very fond of it," Sybil said, modestly; "but I don't know much about dancing. I think I should be almost afraid to try."

Evelyn frowned and bit her lips. What a fool the girl was.

"Why, Sybil!" she said, pettishly, "you are fishing on my side. I want that little fat fish. I'm sure he's got something nice in him."

"You are welcome to him, I'm sure," said Sybil, abandoning her game very pleasantly. "I'd rather have that slim little fellow. Perhaps he hasn't anything in him, and then I shall be allowed to look on."

"Ah!" cried Dick, whose skilled hand had hooked up the first fish. "What have we got here? No. 17. Amy, what is No. 17—gentleman's prize?"

"You dance with Miss Irwin," said Mrs. Bayard, putting a box into her brother's hand.

Dick groaned.

"Never mind," said Arbuthnot, laughing. "We are only going to have six figures. Let us see what you have got."

Dick produced a very pretty leather pocket-book, which they were all admiring, when Miss Evelyn's cry of triumph riveted attention on herself.

"I've got him!" she exclaimed, lifting the fat fish out of the water.

But great was her chagrin when she found that it contained no prize at all, and the name of somebody whom she did not like.

"I'm afraid I shall not catch any," said Sybil, who found it quite difficult.

"You don't go at it right," said Dick. "Drop your hook down deep, and then bring

it up slowly—this way. Try that little fellow over there. That's right. Gently now. There—aha! What did I tell you? That was well done—wasn't it, Ainsley?"

"Excellent!" said Ainsley. "Open him—do! I am consumed with curiosity."

Sybil obeyed, laughingly, expecting nothing.

"By Jove!" Dick cried, "she's hooked the gold ring."

Sure enough, inside of the slim little fish lay the shining band which everyone coveted.

"It is like the Arabian Nights," she said, in astonishment. "How pretty it is! And see, a French motto inside!"

"It means you will be married in a year," said Arbuthnot, smiling into her shy, little, flushed face.

"I don't think that's likely," Sybil replied. "But I never dreamed of getting the ring. I wonder how I ever happened to?"

"There is no great mystery, that I can see," said Evelyn, with a disagreeable laugh. "A brother of Mrs. Bayard's ought to be able to prompt one effectively."

"Miss Ogden," said Dick, quickly, "I hope you do not think that I knew where the ring was?"

"Oh, of course not!" was the sarcastic rejoinder. "Ah, Captain Clyde, is that you? The music is playing. I suppose we may as well go into the ball-room."

Dick Clyde smothered an exclamation, as he turned to Ainsley with a curious look.

"You have not fished yet," he said.

"There is plenty of time," Arbuthnot answered. "There is Miss Irwin, Dick. She looks appealing."

"You always have your own way, Ainsley," Dick said, resentfully, and went off to find his partner.

Sybil and Mr. Arbuthnot were left alone by the table.

"Aren't you going to fish?" she asked.

"No; I am to lead the quadrille, and it is my peculiar privilege to choose a partner. Will you dance with me, Miss Weir?"

"Oh, Mr. Arbuthnot, I shall disgrace you."

"I will run the risk," he said, offering his arm, which she took shyly. "How pretty that ring looks on your hand! Do you know I have a strong desire to put it on with a wish?"

"Well, I haven't any objection," replied Sybil, blushing faintly.

So Ainsley took her small white hand, and put the ring on it.

"It will come true in a year if it comes true at all," he said. "Now, come! The ball begins at ten, and I must tell you what figures I have chosen."

Everybody wanted to know who that quiet little thing was who danced with Ainsley Arbuthnot; and the next day Dick Travers brought a friend to call. He found Evelyn Ogden alone in her glory.

"Miss Weir has gone out to look after a berth," she said, viciously. "She wants to be a governess, I believe."

"Ah, you don't say so?" said Dick's companion, who was the youth with the primrose. "Do you think she would take me for a pupil? I am not much on most things, but the fellows say I am the very deuce at geography."

A month slipped by, and Sybil went home disappointed. It was the wrong time of the year, they said. She might get a place in the autumn, but there was none vacant now.

"I'm afraid I'm not of much account, Aunt Hannah," she said, despondently, as she sat by the little old study lamp, thinking it all over. "I might as well have stayed at home, and not spent the money going to town. 'Indeed'" she added, with a sigh, "it would have been a great deal better."

It was an odd answer to her observation that there came just at that moment a ring at the bell, which brought her face to face in the doorway with Ainsley Arbuthnot.

"I have followed you!" he said, holding the hand which she gave him. "I found that I could not be happy away from you, and I

came to ask, Sybil, whether I might not stay with you always?"

"Come in," she said, leading him into the parlour, where only the firelight shone. "Excuse me," she added, hastily, "I will get a lamp."

"This will do," he said, detaining her. "I like this best. Sybil, you know what I came for. I love you; will you marry me?"

She was a natural girl, without any art or coquetry, and she answered him out of her heart—

"Yes."

"Then my wish will come true," he said, lifting her hand, and kissing it where the gold ring spanned her pretty finger. "Do you know what I wished, darling? The ring said that the year would bring you a husband, and I wished it might be me."

It is needless to say that Sybil did not look for any further position.

"She ought to be satisfied," said Evelyn Odgen, when she heard of the engagement. "It is astonishing what good fortune some of those plain girls have. Mr. Arbuthnot is the best catch of the season."

E. L.

FACETIA.

WHEN is a man in a frame of gilt? When he is looking out of a prison window.

WHEN is a man's motive like his father? When it is apparent.

Some of the petroleum operator: "My 'Art is in the 'ile lands."

"THOUGH lost to sight, to memory dear," as Jones said when Brown ran off and left him to pay the bill.

As a man drinks he generally grows rock-leas: in his case, the more drams the fewer scruples.

WHY is a pig in a parlour like a house on fire? Because the sooner it is put out the better.

"Is your house a warm one, landlord?" asked a gentleman in search of a house. "It ought to be," was the reply; "the painter gave it two coats recently."

WHY is playing chess a more exemplary occupation than playing cards? Because you play at chess with two bishops, but cards with four knaves.

Some one asks: "Is there anything dismaler than a cold, rainy day in March?" To which somebody else replies: "Yes, a humorous lecture in a church, where nobody dares laugh or applaud."

A GOOD LOSS.—A lady, with a sigh, exclaimed: "Well, I have lost my lawsuit." "Oh, mamma, how glad I am," said her child, "that you have lost it, for it tormented you awfully."

A NEAT REPLY.—"Why do you wink at me, sir?" said a beautiful young lady, angrily, to a stranger, at a party an evening or two since. "I beg your pardon, madam," replied the wit. "I winked as men do when looking at the sun; your splendour dazzled my eyes."

"Did you ever try to train a miss?" asked a country pedagogue of farmer Farrow, with a view of perpetrating a protracted pun. "No," said the wily agriculturalist, with a twinkle in his eye; "but I've missed a train without trying." The pedagogue felt that it was time the schoolmaster was abroad, and abroad he went.

DOMESTIC MATTERS.—Budeus, the librarian to Francis I., and one of the most learned men of the sixteenth century, was once engaged in deep study in his library, when his servant came running to him in a great fright, to tell him the house was on fire. With perfect calmness, and hardly raising his eyes from his book, he said: "Go, and inform your mistress; 'tis her concern. You know I never interfere in domestic matters."

WATCH and clock dealers belong to the sell tick race.

THE man who is a slave to the broker is in the worst kind of pawnage.

MAN is like a potato—never sure when he will get "into hot water."

"CHRISTMAS will soon slip round again," as the unmarried clergyman mournfully said, as he looked over his assortment of slippers.

A MAN who is successfully painting a town red is apt to lose colour when he comes to a brush with a policeman.

The artists sent by illustrated papers with the army during the battle draw everything but the sword.

HOW to keep fruit from decaying—Put it in a cool place where there are plenty of children.

Some parish topers make very general complaint as to the dissipated habits of the street lamps, so many of which, it is asserted, are out all night.

An ancient proverb says: "A wise servant shall rule over a foolish son." To suit modern times it would have to be changed to: "A servant girl often bosses the whole family."

He was a foolish fellow, and inclined to go to extremes, who, because he had a horror of capital punishment, refused to even execute a commission.

A CAUTIOUS YOUTH.—A boy who heard the quotation, "A little learning is a dangerous thing," wished to stop going to school, because he was afraid he should not live long enough to get past the dangerous point.

SHREWD BOY.—"Harry, you ought not to throw away nice bread like that; you may want it some day." "Well, mother, would I stand any better chance of getting it then if I should eat it now?"

No matter what Jones may have remarked, it was the witty Smith who retorted upon one who had called him an everyday man, "Well if I am an everyday man, you are a weak one."

"Don't you suppose," said a member of the police force, "that a policeman knows a rogue when he sees him?" "No doubt," was the reply; "but the trouble is that he does not seize a rogue when he knows him."

A MORNING journal asks: "When will newspaper reporters cease to be found fault with?" Probably not till they can write up an account of a street fight truthfully and impartially in such a way that it will be acceptable to the man who gets whipped.

A CONNAUGHT man being told of the American who was so tall that he got up a ladder to shave himself, replied: "And isn't that as 'asy as walkin'? Why wouldn't the jintleman get up a lather to shave himself—that is, barrin' he wore a beard?"

SLUGGARDS.—"Masther," said a little Irish rogue one day to a gardener, "are not plants great sluggards?" "No, certainly not," replied the gardener. "Why, och, I thowt they were, as it's so rarely you sees 'em out of their beds."

THE UNREASONABLE FELLOW!—A bachelor says that all he should ask for in a wife would be a good temper, health, good understanding, agreeable physiognomy, figure, good connection, domestic habits, resources of amusement, good spirits, conversational talents, elegant manners—money!

A DENTIST, whose skill at teeth-pulling is only equalled by his quickness at repartee, was recently waited upon by a wag carrying an old garden rake. "Doctor," said he, "I want you to pull a couple of teeth for me." "Very well," replied the doctor; "take a seat in that chair, and show me the teeth." "Well, doctor," said the wag, "I want you to pull these two broken teeth out of this rake." For a moment the doctor was nonplussed by the joke; but, recovering himself, he soberly pulled the teeth from the rake, and then demanded a heavy fee, which the wag paid still more soberly.

WHEN a man is eating dates, can he be properly said to be consuming time?

TO BE SEEN FOR NOTHING.—The play of the features.

WHY is a specimen of good handwriting like a dead pig? Because it is done with the pen.

RATHER A BROAD FACE.—Somebody in describing a beautiful lady, says she has "a face that a painter might dwell upon." Rather a broad face that.

In what respect does a deaf and dumb married pair have an advantage over other wedded couples? They are sure to be unpeakingly happy.

It is alleged to their discredit that a certain number of people cannot write their own names; and yet how many men have gone to prison for writing the names of others.

ABOVE WATER.—"Times are hard, wife, and I find it difficult to keep my nose above water." "You could easily keep your nose above water, husband, if you didn't keep it so often above brandy."

SAY AN ENTHUSIASTIC LECTURER ON TEMPERANCE: "Let us press fearlessly on, and the battle will certainly be won." The next morning the papers had it: "and the bottle will certainly be ours."

A SHREWISH ANSWER.—Lady (at Sunday school): "And what do you understand by the pomps and vanities of this wicked world?" The head of the class: "The flowers in your bonnet, ma'am."

SEVERE MISTRESS (to slovenly servant): "Maggie, I don't want to see this dust on the furniture again." Maggie (in a tone of cheerful obedience): "Very well, mum, than I'll al'ays shut the blinds afore you comes in the parlour."

THE TALKING FISH ECLIPSED.—A travelling showman announces that he will be in a town in a few days, when he will exhibit, among other curious and interesting objects, a speaking trumpet, walking stick, a pair of dancing pumps, and several shooting boots.

A HELP MEET.—"What shall I help you to?" inquired the daughter of a landlady of a modest youth at the dinner-table. "A wife," was the meek reply. The young lady blushed, perhaps indignantly, and it is said that the kindly offices of a neighbouring clergyman were requisite to reconcile the parties.

NOT VINDICTIVE.—An editor fell on a slippery pavement the other day. He did not use unparliamentary language, as some would have done; but bit his lips, rubbed down the bruises, and, with benevolent smile radiating his countenance, remarked: "We don't cherish any ill-will; but for light and entertaining reading matter recommend us to the obituary notice of the man who ought to sweep this pavement."

A PLUMBER was sent for to the house of a wealthy stockbroker to execute some repairs. He was taken by the butler into the dining-room, and was beginning his work, when the lady of the house entered. "John," said she, with a suspicious glance towards the plumber, "remove the silver from the side-board and lock it up at once." But the man of lead was in nowise disconcerted. "Tom," said he to his apprentice, who accompanied him, "take my watch and chain, and these coppers, home to my missus at once. There seems to be dishonest people about this house."

A YOUTH at school in Scotland, who lacked musical talent, and whose voice consequently jarred during the singing-lesson, was always allowed a holiday on singing-days. His mother, failing to divine the cause of her son's forced absence, paid a visit to the school to inquire into the matter. In answer to her query, as to why her son was sent home on such occasions, the teacher said, "Why, simply because he has no ear!" "What!" she exclaimed, "Nae ear? Did onybody ever hear the like o' that! Nae ear? Why, he has a lug like a saucer, man!"

SOCIETY.

PRINCE GEORGE OF WALES, who is liked everywhere and shows signs of undoubted capacity, is gazetted lieutenant on board the *Dreadnought*.

THE Prince of Wales, who enjoys his stay at Homburg very much, was to visit Berlin, with the idea of being present at the autumn review of the Guards, and making himself agreeable to the German Emperor.

THE representative beauty of the young generation of Royals—Princess Victoria of Teck—says *Modern Society*, is very fittingly having her portrait painted in oils. The picture is to be life-size, and the Duke and Duchess are extremely desirous that this presentation of their only daughter shall do her every justice.

EVERTONE is over the hills and far away that can possibly leave town, and all the watering places are full to overflowing, and the seaside people are already reaping a good harvest, and expect to have the best season they have known for years.

DUBLIN SOCIETY was well represented at the ball given by the Lady Mayoress in honour of the visit of the Indian and Colonial representatives. There were some splendid dresses worn on the occasion. The Lady Mayoress was in a handsome pale pink silk gown, with drapery of broché satin; Lady Marshall had a gown of pale blue silk, the front panel of the broché with gold flowers; a large cluster of wild roses on the bodice, bouquet in the hair to match, and magnificent diamond ornaments. Mrs. Dwyer Gray wore pale yellow satin, covered with yellow tulle, and draped with loops and long ends of dark green velvet. A young Parsee lady attracted much attention (Miss Bhownagree); her dress was composed of soft white striped Eastern stuff, the bodice tight fitting, of blue brocade; the front of her head was covered by bands of glittering silver, and from the back a long white head-dress, with gold and silver bordering, hung nearly to her feet.

Mrs. O'Connor wore a gown of cream silk, with drapery of cream and pink broché, and stomacher of dark red plush. Mrs. Moriarty had a dress of seal brown spotted tulle, with bodices and panels of seal-brown plush; a brown sash. Mrs. Houston wore a dress of white tulle, with front panel of satin, embroidered in seed pearls; diamond ornaments. Mrs. Cox wore a toilette of white poplin, the bodice high to the throat, and carried a large white feather fan. The Lady Mayoress's daughters were dressed alike in flowered muselines de soie.

The wedding of Mr. William Henry Makins (late of 13th Hussars), eldest son of Colonel Makins, M.P., of Rotherfield Court, Henley-on-Thames, with Mary Agnes, only daughter of Sir Charles Laurence Young, Bart., celebrated in the parish church of Hatfield Peverel, Essex, was a stylish affair. The bride wore a bodice with high collar, and train of ivory brocaded satin, the latter edged with feather bordering, and lined with white satin, the ivory satin petticoat being looped on the left side with a bunch of feathers and real orange blossom; her tulle veil was fastened with diamond pins, and her ornaments were pearls and diamonds.

Her train was carried by Master Lionel Bedwell, dressed in a suit of red velvet with large white turned-down collar. The bridesmaids' dresses were of white embroidered muslin, the jacket bodices having revers of white moiré and full vests of embroidered muslin, wide sashes of white moiré and tulle veils with sashettes. Each wore a handsome silver buckle with "From M. A. M. and W. H. M., August 19, 1886," engraved on the back, the bridegroom's gift, and carried a bouquet of red roses tied with red velvet ribbon, the gift of the bridegroom's mother.

STATISTICS.

THE wheat crop of Europe is slightly under an average one. In France it falls twelve per cent. below last year. In Russia spring wheat is a poor yield, but winter wheat is excellent everywhere. Oats and potatoes are big crops.

THE ARMY.—The estimates of army services for 1886-7 has been published. In 1884-5 the net expenditure was £18,224,001; in 1885-6 the estimates amounted to £17,750,800; and for the current year the estimates are put down at £18,233,200. Of this sum, the effective services required £15,272,419; and the non-effective, £3,007,782. There is a decrease on account of pay of £85,700; and, on account of provisions, forage, fuel, transport, and other services, of £116,000; while on account of miscellaneous effective services the diminution amounts to £14,200. The decrease on account of non-effective services amounts to £12,100. There is, on the whole, a net increase in the sums required over 1885-6 of £428,500. The increased charge due to additional numbers this year amounts to £246,000; for warlike stores, small arms, &c., £211,200 are wanted; and for naval armaments, £150,000. The total number of men on the regimental establishments of the army, auxiliary forces and of the reserves is 676,156. Of these 68,196 are on the Indian establishment.

GEMS.

OBEDIENCE alone places a man in the position in which he can see to judge that which is above him.

DISEASE couldn't make a sun in the heavens, but it could make a man blind that he could not see it.

THE working of the good and brave, seen or unseen, endures literally for ever, and cannot die.

WORRY retards rather than forwards work. It tries the mind before the work is begun. It makes one fretful, sours the temper, and disturbs the peace of the household. One who worries is never free from care. There are certain evils which cannot be overcome. We should make the best of them, and not add the burden of worry.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SWEET TOMATO PICKLE.—This is one of the most delightful of sweet pickles, and is very nice with cold meats. Peel and slice the tomatoes, or use the small egg tomatoes. Take half the weight in sugar, and for seven pounds of the fruit, add one ounce of cloves and one of mace and cinnamon mixed. Stew all together with one quart of vinegar for an hour, and seal. Tie the spices in a muslin bag.

BRANDIED PEACHES.—Make a syrup with seven pounds of sugar, and a cup of water; boil and skim. Put in seven pounds of peeled peaches, and boil for ten minutes, or until they are tender. Remove the fruit carefully with a skimmer, and let the syrup boil until it thickens well; add one and a-half pints of the best white brandy, and take at once from the fire. Pour the hot syrup at once over the fruit, which should have been packed in glass jars two-thirds full, and seal.

SWEET PICKLED PEACHES.—Pare seven pounds of peaches, and lay them in a preserving kettle with three and a-half pounds of sugar in alternate layers, letting them stand for an hour. Drain off the syrup, and put it over the fire with a quart of vinegar and two ounces each of whole cloves and stick cinnamon, tied in a small muslin bag. Boil and skim this carefully; put in the peaches; cook until you can perforate them easily with a straw; lift out with a skimmer, and pack in jars. Reduce the syrup by boiling to nearly half; pour over the peaches and seal up.

MISCELLANEOUS.

In a valiant suffering for others, and not in a slothful making others suffer for us, did nobleness ever lie. The chief of men is he who stands in the van of men, fronting the peril which frightens back all others—which, if it be not vanquished, will devour the others. Every noble crown is, and on earth will for ever be, a crown of thorns.

RAT COLLECTIONS IN PARIS.—Paris is cleared of rats by her municipal council offering a premium for their skins. Two years ago the premium was about 12s. per 1,000, in order to get the city cleared of these pests. The rats are of the Norway kind, and breed four times a year. The skins, when collected, are sold to glove makers for four cents each, and many thousand are said to have been made into "genuine kid" gloves last year.

A new source of food supply has been opened up by the importation of frozen mutton from the Falkland Islands. The first cargo of thirty thousand carcasses arrived recently at the East India Docks in perfect condition, and sales of some portions were effected at the rate of sixpence a pound. East Falkland was settled by English colonists in 1853, and West Falkland as late as 1861, yet there are at least one million sheep there. A large steamship fitted with freezing machinery and appliances will make regular runs.

CORK LEATHER, as produced in France, is claimed to possess some special advantages as compared with the natural skins. In its production, thin sheets or pieces of cork are covered on both sides with an extremely thin India-rubber skin, with any ordinary textile fabric outside of all, the whole becoming thus a sort of homogeneous texture or tissue, although the cork sheets, in their normal state, are readily permeable by water, friable and brittle, and possessed of very little strength or cohesion.

HOW LONG TO SLEEP.—The latest authority on this vexed question, Dr. Malins, says that the proper amount of sleep to be taken by a man is eight hours. So far as regards city life, the estimate is probably correct. Proverbial wisdom does not apply to modern conditions of social existence. "Five hours for a man, seven for a woman, and nine for a pig," says one proverb; and a second, quoted by Mr. Hazlitt in his "English Proverbs," declares that "Nature requires five; custom gives seven; laziness takes nine, and wickedness eleven."

COLOURED GLASS, writes a specialist, is of two kinds: One kind coloured throughout the whole substance, and called pot-metal, and the other coloured only on one side, and generally called coated glass. Red or ruby glass is almost invariably coated glass; the other coloured glasses are generally pot metal, though they are also made in coated glass. The use of enamel colours marks a glass painting (a work perfected by the aid of fire) to have been executed not earlier than the middle of the sixteenth century; but if the glass has also been cut with the diamond the production is of no earlier date than the seventeenth century.

STRANGE CUSTOMS OF THE JAPANESE.—There are many strange customs among the Japanese. We weep at misfortunes, the Japanese laugh; our mourning garments are black, theirs white: we think white teeth beautiful, Japanese ladies varnish their teeth black; their builders put on the roof of the house first, and afterwards build the walls; their carpenters draw the plane towards them; their tailors in stitching point the needle from them; in their looks the key turns from left to right; old men in Japan fly kites and spin tops, while children look on; Japanese writers use paint brushes, not pens, and write from top to bottom, from right to left; in Japan there are no lawyers; and Japanese doctors never make any charges or send in any bills.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

DAM.—Not in our power to enlighten you.

C. S.—It is perhaps some throat affection that a good physician could remedy. 2. No.

M. F. G.—It is a matter of opinion, one reader differing widely from another.

L. C.—Pomona is the Roman goddess of fruit trees and gardens.

RALPH.—Glycerine diluted with pure cologne water will sometimes prove very efficacious for the removal of pimples.

S. A. GRIMSHAW.—We presume the wood mentioned can be treated like any other, but we have no recipe that would aid you.

J. F. R.—*Requiescat in pace* means "May he rest in peace." It is a common inscription on tombstones in many countries.

E. D. D.—In such a case the invitation should be addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Smith and family, or to Mr. and Mrs. Smith and Miss Smith. It would be better to send separate invitations. An invitation addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Smith would not include the daughters.

FRED.—When reading an original paper, or a selection from any writer, the paper or book should be held in the hands in a natural manner and the page turned as required. Otherwise the delivery becomes a recitation, and not a reading.

C. P. S.—You should call upon the young lady's mother at her own house and have a full and perfect understanding with her before doing anything looking to a marriage with the daughter. It would be pusillanimous on your part not to call at the house to see the mother of the lady whom you wish to marry.

E. A. N.—1. See a geography or encyclopaedia for the geographical divisions, cities, towns, and boroughs of Ireland. 2. There is a statue of Father Mathew, the temperance advocate, in Cork. We do not know the date of the unveiling. 3. It is impossible to trace proper names.

W. F.—The polar circles are drawn at a distance of 23° degrees from the pole, because that distance marks the limits of the area within which there is found at least one day in each year upon which the sun does not set. In the same way the tropic of Cancer and the tropic of Capricorn, drawn 23° degrees from the Equator, mark the limits of the area in which the sun is vertical, some time in his yearly course.

W. E. H.—It is for your cousin and her family to decide such a question among themselves. The lady probably feels a strong wish to have her dead lover will carried out just as he intended it should be, and therefore it is natural for her to shrink from a sordid compromise, while the rest of you, having no sentimental feeling on the subject, would like to see her make sure of something substantial.

F. H.—Having, we assume, obtained the young lady's own consent, at once speak to her father in a manly straightforward manner, then go with her to the jeweller and buy the engagement ring. 2. It is a very difficult matter to deal with, and we can only suggest that you live simply and take nothing that disagrees with you. Only a medical man acquainted with your constitution and habits would be qualified to give you advice that would relieve you permanently.

V. S.—Your own common-sense should teach you there is no reason to believe that any ill-luck attends a party of thirteen, unless, indeed, there should only be dinner for twelve. How could the fact that thirteen sit down to dinner cause one of the party to die within a year? If there were any truth in the belief the insurance companies should have found it out by this time; but we have never heard of any company which objects to its policy-holders sitting down thirteen dinner as often as they choose.

L. N. B.—Geyers (pronounced as if written *gi-sers*) are intermittent hot springs found in various parts of the world. In Iceland, in a circuit of about two miles, there are more than one hundred springs which send forth hot water; fifty or more in the space of a few acres. The so-called geyers of California are in Sonoma County. Those at the head waters of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers are thought to be the most wonderful on the globe. One called the Giantess, when in action, throws a column of water to the height of 219 feet. Another, Old Faithful, so called for its regularity, spouts at intervals of about an hour.

F. C. G. W.—The harmattan is a dry, hot wind, which blowing from the interior of Africa towards the Atlantic Ocean, prevails in December, January, and February, along the coast of that continent from Cape Verd to Cape Lopez. It comes on at any time during the months mentioned, continues sometimes one or two, and sometimes even fifteen or sixteen days, and is accompanied by a fog which obscures the sun, rendering it of a mild red colour. All vegetation is checked, young or tender plants are destroyed, and grass is turned to hay. It affects the human body also, making the eyes, nostrils and lips dry, and at times causing the skin to parch and peel off; but it checks epidemics, and cures persons afflicted with dysentery, fevers, or cutaneous diseases. It is the same in its character as the sirocco of Italy and the kamain of Egypt. The word is pronounced har-mat-tan.

ROSY.—Name some particular one. It is a matter of opinion who is the greatest.

W. H. T.—Your handwriting is quite fair, and without particular signification.

ARTHUR.—All you can do is to get an introduction, and then make yourself as agreeable as possible to the young lady. No one can help a sighing swain very much. In love matters a man must act for himself.

D. V.—The Live Oak is so called on account of its thick evergreen leaves, which retain their greenness all the year round, even when the other oaks look dead and bare.

EXCERSON.—Read Justin McCarthy's "History of our Times," and Green's "Short History of the English People," and attentively study the best newspapers and magazines.

PUZZLED.—The changes in the face of the moon are caused by the changes in the relative positions of the earth, moon, and sun. One-half of the moon is always illuminated, but sometimes the illuminated half is almost completely turned away from the earth.

S. N. D.—The crown of iron worn by the Lombard king, though chiefly of gold, derived its name from an iron band which encircled it in the interior, and which was said to have been made from one of the nails which served in the crucifixion of Christ. It is still preserved in the Cathedral of Monza, and was one of the crowns of the Austrian emperors while they were masters of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom. Napoleon wore it when he was crowned King of Italy at Milan.

NOT ALL SUMMER.

The roses of summer are red and white;
And see I twine them in your hair,
That they may nestle in the light
That heaven and nature mingle there;
And, like your lips beyond compare,
Are roses all along our way.

Why should we ever dream of care,
If life were all a summer-day?

Your voice, that thrills me with delight,
Has notes of sweetness deep and rare;
And, like the lily's petals white,
The robe of purity you wear.
And, by your heavenly eyes, I swear
That, come what would to love dismay,
I still would hold thee chaste and fair,
If life were all a summer-day.

Our day of love would know no night,
Nor threatening cloud of dark despair;
No frost of jealousy would blight.
O haunting hate our rapture share;
But we, with spirits light as air,
Would live and love from gold to grey,
Of pain and sorrow unaware,
If life were all a summer-day.

But clouds sometimes the sky must bear,
Or winter hold her frosty sway;
And life, sweet one, would be less fair,
If life were all a summer-day.

D. D. R.—A tablespoonful of the following tonic, administered three times a day, will, it is said, remove the prostrating effects of drinking to excess: Sulphate of quinine, five grains; aromatic sulphuric acid, ten drops; compound tincture of gentian, half an ounce; compound tincture of cardamoms, two drams; ginger syrup, one and a half ounces; water two ounces. Mix.

H. S. C.—Pure nitro-glycerine is an oily, colourless liquid, prepared by introducing strong nitric and sulphuric acids into glycerine, drop by drop. Nitro-glycerine explodes by heating to a certain point, by a blow, or by the explosion, in contact with it, of any fulminite, such as fulminating mercury. When carefully made, it sometimes explodes spontaneously, and yet this dangerous liquid can be ignited and burned like common oil, under certain conditions.

G. H. M.—A lithograph is a picture printed from a drawing on stone. The stone used is a kind of limestone, found in Bavaria. It is made up chiefly of lime, clay, and silica; is usually of a pearl-grey colour, and has a very fine grain. The stones are taken out of the quarry in large pieces, and afterward sawed up into slabs two or three inches thick, and of any size wanted.

The face of the slab is then ground perfectly flat and polished smooth. After the drawing, which can be made with a crayon or pen and ink, has become dry, it is ready to be printed from. The crayons used are made mostly of tallow, wax, hard soap, and shellac, coloured with lamp-black. The ink is a little piece of crayon mixed with some water. Very frequently the picture, instead of being drawn on the stone, is made on thin paper, called transfer paper, which is coated on one side with a mixture of gum, starch, and alum. The drawing is thus made on the coating, and not on the paper itself. The paper is then laid on the stone face downward, (and pressed, and the ink of the drawing sticks fast to the stone; the back of the paper is next moistened with water, which loosens the gum, and the paper may then be taken off, leaving the drawing sticking to the stone. The rest of the gum is now washed off the ink, and the stone can be printed from just as if the drawing had been made on the stone. Success in the process described depends a great deal upon the quality of the paper used, for if it be brittle it will soon act upon the stone; and upon the manner of regulating the press. In fact, only an experienced person can do the necessary work properly.

P. F.—We have no knowledge of it.

A. H. COSMO.—Never.

D. F.—Women come of age at twenty-one.

IN A FIX.—The simplest way would be to address "Madam and Sir."

LILLIAN E.—1. It depends entirely upon the young lady's capabilities. 2. Fix the situation named it is essential that the candidate is a fair scholar, very quick at figures, and a rapid and good writer. At least six months would have to be given. The handwriting would not be good enough. 3. It depends whether you mean a hand machine or one worked with treadle.

ADELINA.—The better plan would be to get a piano and employ a music teacher. Having the instrument in the house, you would be able to practice at odd times, and thus make more rapid progress. There is nothing to be ashamed of in the fact that you have not had opportunities earlier in life to gratify your musical tastes.

LITTLE DUNCE.—The Suez Canal is about 100 miles long, of which 75 miles are actual canal, while for 25 miles it passes through lakes, a portion of which afforded water of sufficient depth, but the greater part of which required excavating. The width, except at those places where it runs through high ground, is 325 feet at the surface, and 72 feet at the bottom, and the depth 26 feet. Where it runs through high ground the width is 195 feet at the surface.

M. M. B.—Tell him the truth by all means; he is bound to know the fact sooner or later, and will think all the more of you if you tell him yourself instead of leaving him to find it out. Avoid quarrelling as much as you can. He seems to be of a forgiving disposition, so do not impose on his good nature too much, or you may go a step too far. 2. In 1863 Easter Monday was on the 10th of April. 3. January 6th, 1866, fell on a Saturday. 4. The best remedy is simple living, plenty of exercise, and avoiding greasy or salt food. 5. The names are not the same.

S. M.—The celebrated Laura Bridgeman, a blind deaf mute, was born at Hanover, New Hampshire, United States, on December 27, 1829. She possessed all her faculties up to the age of two years, but at that time sickness attacked her, and she lost her sight, speech, and hearing, and even her sense of smell became impaired. Her health gradually returned to her, but she never regained her lost senses. She became an inmate, at the age of eight, of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, under the care of Dr. S. G. Howe, who devoted himself to her education. She was first taught the names of objects by putting a spoon, or fork, or some other familiar object in her hand, with its name in raised letters. She was then furnished with type and a board which had been pierced with holes for the reception of the type. Objects known to her were then presented, and she would compose the names with the type. She was next taught to write, and she subsequently acquired the rudiments of arithmetic, and took lessons on the piano, on which she became a skilful performer. She also learned to make her own clothing, and to run a sewing-machine. She was never happier than when she could find some person who knew the finger alphabet and could converse with her on subjects on which she was most interested.

STUDIOS BOH.—The sphinx is a fabulous monster of Greek mythology. Some writers represent her as one of the women who with the daughters of Cadmus were thrown into madness and metamorphosed into monsters. She was ravaging Thebes and devouring those who could not solve a riddle which she proposed to all whom she met when (Edipus) being offered the crown of Thebes on condition of delivering the country from the monster, solved the riddle, upon which the sphinx destroyed herself. The following was the riddle: "A being with four feet has two feet and three feet, and only one voice; but its feet vary, and when it has most it is weakest." (Edipus) answered that it was a man, who in infancy crawls upon all fours, in manhood walks erect, and in old age supports himself by a staff. (Edipus) was the son of Laius and Jocasta. The sphinx was represented generally as having the winged body of a lion and the breast and head of a woman, but sometimes with the female face, the breast, feet, and claws of a lion, the tail of a serpent, and the wings of a bird; and sometimes the fore part of the body is that of a lion, and the lower part that of a man, with the claws of a vulture and the wings of an eagle; all which forms were used as architectural ornaments.

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